Series 5

Child Care Needs of Parents and Families

Prepared as Background Papers for

Report of the Task Force on Child Care

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Child Care Needs of Parents and Families

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FOREWORD

The Task Force on Child Care commissioned a series of research studies designed, for the most part, to provide detailed analyses of selected issues of special relevance to child care and parental leave policies and their effects on the changing Canadian family.

The terms of reference for the Task Force called for an examination and assessment of the need for child care services and paid parental leave in Canada, and of the adequacy of the current system in meeting the perceived needs. Most of the research reports, therefore, were designed to pull together and analyze information from existing sources. However, in a number of instances, it was necessary to initiate primary research because of the absence of data in the area. Parents' Needs, Preferences, and Concerns About Child Care: Case Studies of 336 Canadian Families, and The Bottom Line: Wages and Working Conditions of Workers in the Formal Day Care Market are two such studies.

While these studies incorporate a wealth of useful information, which provided the Task Force with the basis on which to develop its arguments and recommendations, they are reflective of the views of the authors, and should not be interpreted as representing the views of the Task Force. Furthermore, the studies do not reflect the policy or the intentions of the Government of Canada.

Status of Women Canada makes these research reports available to groups, organizations and individuals wishing to explore in greater depth the Task Force report and issues relating to child care and parental leave. This reflects the department's objective of providing a broad basis for public discussion of issues relating to the equality of women in Canadian society.

Other papers published in this series are listed at the back of this publication. Copies of these papers are available by writing to:

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CHILD CARE NEEDS OF IMMIGRANTS

Paper prepared for the Task Force
on Child Care
by

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January 1985

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INTRODUCTION

Canada has always depended on immigration to fill a significant proportion of its human resource needs. During the past three decades, 4.42 million immigrants have entered Canada. According to the 1981 Census, 16.1 percent of the Canadian population is foreign-born.1

Despite high levels of unemployment, the trend toward further immigration is likely to continue. The 1966 White Paper on Immigration indicated that "it is in Canada's interest to accept, and if need be, to encourage, the entry to this country each year of as many immigrants as can readily be absorbed." The paper further stated that "Canada is an underpopulated country by most standards of measurement --- a bigger population means increased domestic markets for our industries" and there are "very important economic reasons why immigration tends to increase the real income per person available to all Canadians."2

While Canada's immigration policy might become more selective, immigration is clearly here to stay. A recently published Statistics Canada report indicates, that with decreasing fertility rates, immigration levels must increase to produce growth in the population.3 This being said, it is reasonable to expect Canadian public policy to ensure that every effort be made to fully integrate immigrants into Canadian society.

The Abella Commission made some useful recommendations in this regard, namely: to publish the range of social and educational programs to immigrants, to commence the acculturation process prior to immigration, to hire employment and immigration counsellors who are experts in the language and culture of the immigrants they serve, to establish a new agency to assist skilled immigrants to pursue their careers in Canada, to extend language training to all immigrants who wish it, and to actively recruit child care providers from minority groups.4

The purpose of this paper is to address one of the issues raised by the Abella Commission: the child care needs of the immigrant population. Suggestions will be made for addressing these needs. There are a number of child care problems experienced by immigrants which are identical to those faced by the general population, but which have a special impact on immigrants. In addition, immigrants have special child care needs beyond those shared with non-immigrants. Both of these sets of needs will be examined in this discussion.

CHILD CARE NEEDS OF IMMIGRANTS

1. Need for Child Care

In many immigrant families, both parents must work to ensure the survival of the family. Foreign-born women have higher rates of labour force participation than Canadian-born women; a larger proportion of immigrant women works for a longer period of time than their Canadian counterparts.5 Richmond indicates that there is an inverse relationship between labour force participation of immigrant wives and earnings of husbands, with the highest participation rates among those women whose husbands earn less than $10 000.6 This necessity for immigrant women to work, coupled with their separation from extended families and kinship systems, makes it essential for them to find alternative child care arrangements outside the family.

2. Affordability of Child Care

Affordability of day care has been an on-going problem for Canadian families, especially for those on low incomes. Nowhere is it more critical than among the immigrant population. Shelia Arnopoulos indicated that immigrant women are over-represented in the low-wage service and manufacturing occupations: "More than any other group, women immigrants are located in the poorly-paid labour market sectors where they work as domestics, chamber maids, building cleaners, dishwashers, waitresses, sewing machine operators and plastics workers... they occupy the bottom rung of the 'vertical mosaic'."7

Low wages and the high cost of day care poses a major problem for immigrant families, preventing many of them from availing themselves of good quality care for their children. In a brief to the Task Force on Child Care, the Chinese Neighbourhood Society of Montreal indicated that most mothers in its community are forced to remain at home because fees for child care are too high. Another brief pointed out that many immigrants have lower economic prospects than the host population and therefore are less able to afford the price of child care services.8

Another aspect of affordability is the limited access of immigrant parents to day care subsidies. Many immigrant families are unaware that subsidies are available; even if they do know about them, they have difficulty obtaining them because of language problems and lack of familiarity with the system.9 Furthermore, some immigrant groups contend that even when subsidy is available, it is too low to cover the full cost of the services.10

3. Availability and Accessibility of Day Care

The issues of availability and accessibility of day care are two interrelated problems shared by immigrant parents and their Canadian counterparts. There are simply too few spaces to meet the needs of parents who must work for long hours, usually on shifts. When questioned regarding specific problems related to ethnicity and culture, Naldi Nomez, of New Experiences for Refugee Women, indicated that other problems would be eliminated if availability of spaces and accessibility to day care were guaranteed; indeed, problems of culture and ethnicity are secondary.

The need for day care for parents who work on shifts is a particularly urgent one. In the occupations in which immigrants are employed, shift work is common. The scarcity of care for the children of these workers is a serious problem. In a brief to the Ontario Standing Committee on Social Development, one group related stories of immigrant children left alone, sometimes locked inside with the television turned on to entertain them until the second parent returns home, and of parents hiding their children's clothes to prevent them from going outside. For these children, the "fear of the bogeyman will provide child care" for two or three hours, but in case of a fire or serious emergency, who will help them?11 one mother asked. These cases raise questions: Is this a milieu in which children should be raised? What is the long-term effect on children of this environment of fear?

One should not assume, however, that only immigrant parents leave their children to care for themselves. A study conducted by the Manitoba Child Care Association found that recent immigrants were less likely to resort to self-care than their Canadian counterparts.12 This phenomenom of self-care may well be the only alternative for many parents juggling work and family responsibilities in a society with so few resources devoted to child care.

A British study on child-minding in ethnic communities found ethnic mothers to be particularly disadvantaged with respect to availability and accessibility of day care. There was a greater need because a greater proportion of these women were working, yet they were less able to find the type of day care they needed; they had less access to subsidized or free services; they had fewer choices of child-minders because of the reluctance of English minders to take minority children; and they had difficulty finding minders close to home. The study noted a high degree of anxiety bordering on desperation among ethnic minority mothers, and made a special plea for awarding a higher priority for day care children under five, and for giving of special attention to the "needs of children of ethnic minority parentage."13 Although similar studies have not been conducted in Canada, there is no reason to believe that the identified problems in the United Kingdom are absent in the Canadian society. If this is true, the special plea in the British report is equally applicable to Canada. Special attention must be given to the day care needs of ethnic minorities: they face the same difficulties experienced by other Canadian parents seeking child care, but because of the difficulty of adjustment, problems of availability and accessibility are intensified.

Another issue in this area is the lack of emergency care when children become ill. The low incomes of immigrant women make it impossible for them to find or avail themselves of emergency care. Yet, if they take time off from work to care for their children, they are regarded as unreliable workers.14

Transportation is another aspect of the accessibility issue. Because of low income, many immigrants are unable to purchase a vehicle, especially during the first few years following immigration. In areas where public transportation is either limited or non-existent, the inability to transport children to and from a day care centre has the effect of limiting access to services.15

4. Language and Day Care

Most day care programs and related documentation are carried out in one or both of the official languages (English or French). Immigrants who do not have a facility in one of these languages find themselves at a particular disadvantage in the day care system. They cannot understand the instructions given by day care providers, and interpreters are not provided. The lack of facility in the language also prevents parents from fully participating in the activities of the day care centre, and limits access to, and choice of, day care services.

Yet, for ethnic minorities, there are supplementary benefits to be derived from enrolling their children in day care programs. For the entire family a day care may be the first doorway to Canadian society. The child from an immigrant background who has a day care experience is better prepared for integration into the school system.

Day care providers should be cognizant of the language question even with children who speak one of the official languages. A significant part of language is culturally based; the connotation of words differs from one culture to another.

It is important that the teacher understands the influence of a child's background in his/her classroom behaviour, and in so doing he/she can appropriately interpret and respond to the child's reactions. The following example illustrates how misinterpretations occur:

> As part of an intergrated unit on nutrition, the teacher is presenting a lesson on the classification of various foods into their groups (fruits & vegetables, meat & equivalents, milk group, bread & cereals, and extras). She is well prepared. Based on her knowledge of how children learn, she has included various audio-visual aids and several concrete props in an effort to motivate the children and enhance participation. In general, she has succeeded, for most of the children clustered around her table are volunteering answers to her questions and participating enthusiastically in the discussion. Most are able to complete the follow-up classification activities successfully, and some even go beyond what was required by colouring the pictures or working on a related creative activity.
>
> But one little boy, a recent newcomer to Canada from the West Indies, doesn't respond as enthusiastically as the teacher had hoped this afternoon. He stands at the back of the group, his eyes looking down a great deal of the time. He does not volunteer answers or participate in the discussion; and when called upon, he mumbles so that the teacher asks him to repeat himself and the other children either giggle or look perplexed. He doesn't seem to know what to do during actvity time; and after some encouragement, those activities he does attempt are done either incompletely or incorrectly. The teacher interprets his behaviour as shy, withdrawn, possibly even delayed or slow; amd since this is the usual pattern in other parts of the program, she will likely report her perceptions to his parents for remedial help, ESL/D classes, special education, or whatever special programs are available in her Board, or simply continue to face the daily frustration of trying to "get through" to the child and "bring him out" while working with approximately thirty other children.16

Even with flawless preparation, this well-intentioned, sensitive teacher had prepared and presented her material from the standpoint of the host society, without considering the needs of the immigrant child in her class. Had she considered his needs, she might have visited the ethnic market and chosen some of the foods with which the child was familiar. This would have given him the opportunity and the pleasure of sharing an aspect of his culture with the other children. Furthermore, the teacher would have dismissed concern regarding his attentiveness or cognitive skills.

Children of minority groups are sometimes excluded from class activity because they cannot relate to many aspects of the program. They are not only different, but they feel confused, inadequate, inferior, isolated within the peer group, and often misjudged by the teacher. The learning process is therefore inhibited, and incorrect stereotypes are reinforced. It is no small wonder that many ethnic children suffer problems of self-image.17

This type of problem, if not addressed immediately, can result in a double disadvantage for minority children in Canadian society: inadequate education will be added to their minority position.

A final component of the language debate relates to the complexities and anomolies of the present language-training system, which limit access of immigrant parents to language training. The allowance scheme under the National Training Program (NTP) has been criticized as being too complex, and has been found to discriminate against low-income individuals who seek to avail themselves of training.* The unavailability of any income support for sponsored immigrants who wish to partake in language training under the N.T.P. is another anomoly. While part-time, and sometimes full-time, training may be available, the ineligibility for income support, coupled with the lack of child care facilities and subsidies to cover the cost, limits the participation of these parents. This places many immigrants in a no-win situation. Without language skills, they cannot secure jobs with adequate salaries which could facilitate their integration into Canadian society. Parents who must work long hours, and are required to fulfill parental responsibilities, find it difficult to avail themselves of evening programs. Even in cases where parents are willing to take evening programs, the cost and scarcity of care for their children precludes their participation.

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* In a two-parent family, where one spouse earns less than $150 taxable income per week, the other spouse is eligible to receive a training allowance of $70 weekly plus $30 for the first child and $15 for each additional child; he/she is ineligible for the weekly $75 per child dependent care allowance. On the other hand, if one parent is employed with a $151 weekly taxable income, the spouse in training is eligible for the basic allowance of $25 per week, plus the dependent care allowance of $75 weekly per child. If both parents were on a training course, the first would receive $115 per week ($75 training allowance plus $45 for the two children), and the second would receive the $70 training allowance; they, however, would be ineligible for the dependent care allowance. Circumstances where both parents are on language training at the same time are more likely to occur within immigrant families. The present system of income support makes it difficult for them to take advantage of the National Training Program.

5. Culture and Ethnicity

Two aspects of this issue must be considered. The first is imperative for the day care environment to be sensitive to the needs, values, expectations and child-rearing practices of cultural and ethnic minorities. Child rearing practices are culturally based. They vary from culture to culture and differences are highlighted when people migrate from one culture to another. Differences, however, do not indicate a hierarchy, and there is no reason for parents to be treated with indifference because their values are different from the prevailing Canadian ethos. The British Study, cited earlier, indicates that indifference to these cultural differences is a significant problem in the United Kingdom. Discussions with one day care worker in Toronto confirm that the problem does exist in Canada. She pointed out that parents are "put down" because their values and child-rearing practices are different.18 It is important that the day care experience, which can be one of the first experiences in the acculturation process, be positive for the entire family. "The more a teacher knows about the child's family structure, parent-child relationships, education, religion, superstitions, attitudes, values, and experiences, the better prepared that teacher will be to ease the child's and family's adjustment. The teacher who understands child development and cultural influences on the child and family will be best able to help in that adjustment."19

The second component of the culture and ethnicity issue is the need for day care programming to directly reflect the needs and values of immigrant children. "Ethnic identity is an integral part of the child's self-concept; to ignore or erase cultural ties can only lower the child's self-esteem. The teacher who is sensitive to the emotional needs of the children and who creates an environment where every child experiences security and a sense of belonging, is well on the way to ensure favourable self-concepts and best possible learning."20 Children begin to develop attitudes in the preschool years, and they are very sensitive to the attitudes of adults around them; biases of early childhood educators can have a significant impact on the child's self-concept. It is therefore vital that caregivers, teachers, and day care providers be sensitive to the needs of all children, including those from ethnic minorities.

Mock pointed out that, "Most early childhood materials presume a common body of pre-school cultural experiences, including nursery rhymes, games, stories, foods, popular animals, knowledge of seasons, Canadian holiday celebrations, and even similar patterns of interaction with adults... Rarely does a teacher stop to reflect on how culturally biased are our expectations for the classroom behaviour and abilities of even a very young child."21

For integration of children of ethnic minorities into Canadian society without undue anxiety, the day care environment must strive to reflect the spirit of multiculturalism in Canada, which promotes harmony within diversity. This will not only benefit the immigrant child, but will provide a richer and more varied program for all children.

ADDRESSING THE CHILD CARE NEEDS OF IMMIGRANTS

It is expected that a large proportion of immigrant families will continue to be two-earner families, thus maintaining the need for child care. The availability of a good mix of affordable, accessible child care services is essential for these families' well-being and for their adjustment to Canadian society. To meet their needs, such child care services should: offer choices between centre care and family care; incorporate multicultural programming; operate on flexible hours to accommodate parents who work on shifts; and employ caregivers sensitive to the needs of ethnic minorities.

It can be argued that immigrants in the past have somehow addressed the problem without outside intervention. As previously discussed, some of the solutions to the day care dilemma reached by immigrant parents are less desirable, and in fact may constitute neglect under current Canadian legislation. Every effort should be made to prevent this from happening among our immigrant population.

Immigrants, as a whole, do not show a preference for only one type of day care. Some ethnic groups indicate a preference for centre care, presumably because of the educational and developmental potential of such programs, while other groups prefer to hire sitters, possibly from the same ethnic background. In a 1977 survey of 742 respondents in Toronto, Project Child Care found that, although a greater proportion of non-Canadian-born parents utilize sitter care (Table 1, p. 10), when questioned about their ideal form of child care, many groups expressed a preference for day care centres (Table 2, p. 11). Furthermore, when questioned about their preferred type of care for a three-year-old child, most families expressed a preference for centre care (Table 3, p. 11).

Table 1[a]

Relationship between Birthplace of Respondent and Type of Child Care Utilized (n=733)

	Birthplace of Respondent per cent		
Type of Care	In Canada	Outside Canada	n
Sitter	58.7	40.2	(334)
Non-Resident, Relative	15.0	16.0	(115)
Daycare Centre	15.5	9.8	(84)
Resident, Relative	10.8	34.0	(200)
Totals: %	100.0	100.0	
n	(213)	(520)	

Notes: a Laura C. Johnson, Who Cares?: A Report of the Project Child Care Survey of Parents and their Child Care Arrangements. Toronto: Social Planning Council of Metro Toronto, 1977, p. 72.

Table 2b

Relationship Between Family Ethnicity and Ideal Type of Child Care (n=646)

Family Ethnicity - Per Cent

		Italian	Portugese	Chinese	Greek	West Indian	Other Ethnic	Canadian Born or English-Speaking
Ideal Type of Child Care	Daycare Centre	55.6	30.9	22.2	32.3	50.3	66.5	48.7
	Relative	33.0	45.7	21.6	44.4	9.0	11.2	14.1
	Sitter	11.4	23.4	56.2	23.3	40.7	22.3	37.2
	Total: %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	n	(79)	(68)	(20)	(21)	(88)	(80)	(290)

Notes: b Laura C. Johnson, Who Cares?: A Report of the Project Child Care Survey of Parents and their Child Care Arrangements. Toronto: Social Planning Council of Metro Toronto, 1977, p. 228.

Table 3

Relationship Between Family Ethnicity and Type of Care Preferred for 3-Year-Old Child (n=724)

Preferred Type of Care for 3-Year-Old Child - Per Cent

		Day Care Centre	Sitter	Totals %	Totals n
Family Ethnicity	Italian	79.8	20.2	100.0	(93)
	Portuguese	71.8	28.2	100.0	(76)
	Greek	74.4	25.6	100.0	(23)
	Chinese	61.3	38.7	100.0	(26
	West Indian	88.1	11.9	100.0	(100)
	Other Ethnic	90.5	9.5	100.0	(91)
	Canadian-born or English spoken in home	77.4	22.6	100.0	(315)

Clearly, there are benefits to be derived from day care experiences for immigrant children, since day care can give them a definite advantage later in school adjustment. Most immigrant families are themselves trying to cope with a new society, and are unable to provide the guidance necessary for school adjustment and performance. These parents are faced with a massive adaptation process: a new language, new child-rearing practices, new laws, new foods, a different climate, etc. Making all these changes in their lives while at the same time coping with young children can present a significant challenge. Even in cases where one parent is at home and children do not go to day care centres, immigrant families need support systems to assist them in the first few years after immigration. Employment and Immigration Canada should be encouraged to fund, through its Settlement program, community agencies to develop these support systems. This type of investment will yield positive results for Canada's immigrants and society as a whole, in terms of maximizing the human potential of immigrants.

Any improvement in availability, accessibility and affordability of child care for the general population will benefit the immigrant population. However a number of measures would be particularly beneficial for Canada's immigrant parents. These are:

1) provision of transportation services for children to and from day care centres;

2) provision of information on child care and family support services to immigrants in their own language, prior to immigration and at points of entry;

3) extension of the child care subsidy to children of sponsored immigrants;

4) use of ethnic presses to disseminate new information on day care and family support services;

5) sensitivity and responsiveness on the part of educators and caregivers to the cultures and needs of ethnic minorities.

Workplace day care, suggested by some as a solution to immigrant day care needs, is not a desirable option, since it would tie immigrant parents to low-paying jobs and isolate their children.22 Immigrant parents prefer access to community-based centre and family care which accommodates their working hours, responds to their children with sensitivity and understanding, and provides their children with an environment where acculturation to Canadian society can take place.

In addressing the language question, it is essential that day care centres with a high concentration of ethnic children of a particular language group make special efforts to hire caregivers or support staff who are fluent in the language of these children, and are sensitive to the norms of that culture. It is also important that these child care centres incorporate language-training classes (ESL/FSL) to assist immigrant children to learn one of Canada's official languages prior to school entry.

Difficulties experienced by sponsored immigrants in attempting to receive language training under the National Training Program must be alleviated. Most immigrants - even those who are sponsored - enter the labour force. Their contribution as employees, and their participation in society, including their roles as parents are severely restricted because of language barriers. Some consideration should be given by the federal Employment and Immigration Commission to removing the anomolies and inequities inherent in access to language training. This should include the provision of subsidized child care for parents undertaking language training.

A final issue relates to the sensitivity of caregivers and day care providers to the needs of ethnic minorities, and the development of programs to assist the immigrant child to develop and maintain a positive self-concept. This can be achieved through:

1) teacher-education which recognizes the value of multiculturalism and its importance to Canadian society. Teachers so trained will be able to identify and present to children objective materials about different cultures, instead of materials prepared from the standpoint of the dominant group.

2) hiring of child care staff who are literate in the minority language or dialect of the target population. By recognizing that ethnic identity is an integral part of self-concept, they can foster a respect for different cultures and for children from different ethnic origins.

3) creating a multicultural environment through programming. The judicious introduction of ethnic foods, the observance of special holidays,[23] as well as pictures, stories, games, and dolls can all teach children positive attitudes about themselves and about other cultures. While there is still room for the development of new material for multicultural programming, good resources are already available. One good source book is available from the Faculty of Education, University of Toronto.[24] Other materials can be obtained from the federal department of the Secretary of State, and provincial departments responsible for education, culture and recreation.

4) involving parents, relatives and people from ethnic minorities in programming. One junior kindergarten teacher found that, after making significant efforts on her own to develop a multicultural program for her class, she received positive response from parents in terms of encouragement, loan of family treasures, and samples of food. She resolved that in future attempts at such a program she would certainly involve the parents.[25]

Some ethnic groups have responded to the lack of multicultural education by establishing their own programs, such as the Heritage Language program for preschool, Punjabi-speaking children in Victoria. This program attempts to reinforce the linguistic and cultural identity of these children.[26] The Jewish community in Montreal provides the opportunity for children to participate in special religious observances, and traditions.[27] A number of similar programs exist elsewhere in Quebec. All such programs aim to transmit cultural heritage to the children, at the same time fostering social interaction with other children of the peer group. However, these types of programs might not be viable in small ethnic communities with smaller numbers of children. Moreover, they fall short of the cultural sharing which a multicultural program provides.

CONCLUSIONS

Immigrant parents, like their Canadian counterparts, need child care services to assist them to combine work and family responsibilities. However, their unfamiliarity with the system, along with distance from their usual support systems, place them at an added disadvantage. Furthermore, their position in the socio-economic stratum makes adjustment to Canadian life a difficult one. If first-generation Canadians are to have equality of opportunity, every effort should be made to ensure that the adjustment process begins as early as possible. The design of any child care system should ensure that the needs of immigrant parents and children are appropriately considered.

The federal government has a unique role to play in addressing the child care needs of immigrants because a number of the solutions fall within its purview. Employment and Immigration Canada should be encouraged to:

1. provide information packages on day care for prospective and newly-arrived immigrants. This should, ideally, be in the language of the immigrant.
2. remove the inequities and anomolies associated with funding language training and extend language training (including subsidized child care) to all immigrant parents who require such training.
3. extend funding to community groups to develop child care and family support components to facilitate integration of immigrant children into Canadian society.

The federal multicultural directorate of the Department of the Secretary of State should be encouraged to:

1. provide grants for the development and promotion in educational institutions of multicultural material necessary to prepare caregivers to respond sensitively to the needs of children.
2. fund workshops and seminars on multiculturalism for child caregivers and ECE teachers.
3. provide consultants and resources on multiculturalism and early childhood education for use of provincial governments.
4. give priority to inclusion of child care services in orientation programs offered to immigrant women.[28]

Provincial governments also have a role in meeting the child care needs of immigrants. Provincial departments of education should design appropriate courses of study for teachers to instil the value of multiculturalism for the health and well-being of its citizens and society as a whole. Such courses should be developed in consultation with ethnic minorities, and should be an integral part of on-going teacher training. Furthermore, provincial citizenship programs should ensure that their activities are directed toward recognizing and enhancing the participation of all ethnic groups within the Canadian mosaic.

Finally, day care administrators and providers should make every effort to create a multicultural environment through programming. Multicultural programming can create a rewarding and enriching experience for all children. The children will learn not only from their caregivers, but from each other and each other's families. The creation of day care centres which incorporate this type of programming represents the first step in fostering tolerance and appreciation of cultural diversity, which can yield significant dividends for Canadian society in the future.

NOTES

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24 Keith McLeod (ed.), Multi-cultural Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Education, Toronto: University of Toronto, 1984.

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28 Since 1981, orientation programs have been offered to immigrant women; the value of these programs, however, is limited by the extent to which participants can secure adequate child care to allow them to attend.

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APPENDIX
SIGNIFICANT FESTIVALS AND CELEBRATIONS AND RELATED ACTIVITIES

Celebration	Approximate Date	Ethnic Group	Meaning of Celebration	Suggested Activities
FALL				
Sukkot	September or October	Jewish	harvest; commenemorates the Jewish exodus from Egypt	-taste jewish "apple slice" or rolled streudel -build a small "sukkah" and discuss its meaning
Trung-Thu	15th day of the eighth moon	Vietnamese	mid-autumn festival	-serve moon cakes and lotus tea -have a candle procession
Thanksgiving	October November	(Canadian) (American)	day of worship or thanksgiving for a successul harvest	-apple dolls -straw dolls - necklaces of seeds and cranberries -set up a bird feeder -collage: of grains, leaves, seeds, dried fruit, flowers, weeds.
Festival of the Moon		Chinese	a form of thanksgiving when hymns of praise and thanks are sung for the bounty of the harvest. Legend says it is the birthday of the moon. Red candles and incense are burned for this celebration, which last 3 days.	-decorate classroom with coloured lights and candles -have parents prepare special meal to celebrate festival
Diwali - Festival	October or November	Hindu	Lakshimi, the God of Beauty comes to visit the house. Houses are decorated with lights and candles. Many rituals associated with this festival depending on geographic area. In Canada celebrated with lights, good wishes, entertainment and worship.	-decorate the classroom with coloured lights and and candles -enlist the support of parents in preparing decorations and refreshments.
WINTER				
St. Nikolaus Day	December 6	German, Dutch	time for children to receive small gifts from St. Nikolaus; In Dutch tradition St. Nikolaus is a bishop with a long white beard who appears riding a horse. He is accompanied by Black Peter, a moorish page who carries his sack with presents for good children and switches for naughty ones.	-make and exchange small gifts (bookmark, prints, etc.)
Hanukkah	December	Jewish	Festival of light celebrating religious freedom. Festival lasts 9 days and children receive gifts each niget - usually a coin	-make dredl. -make hunukkah cookies - light menorah candles -enlist parent's support to make potato latkes

Las Posadas	December 24	Mexican Spanish	commemorates the trip to Bethlehem by Mary and Joseph on the night before Christmas	-make a Pinata and fill with gum, candy, nuts and small toys, hang from ceiling and have children break with a stick. (Activity takes 3 days).
St. Lucia	December 24	Swedish	Swedish Christmas where lights and candles are featured to bring brightness to long days of darkness.	
Le Reveillon	December 24	French Canadian	joyous occasion celebrated with family and friends after the midnight mass.	enlist parents to make tourtières
Christmas	December 25	Christian	most widely celebrated Christian holiday representing the birth of Christ. It presents an opportunity for Christians to renew beliefs and express their faith with love, joy and hope for peace on earth.	-music -carols -plays and pageants depicting the Christmas story -gift-giving
Kwanza	December 26	African	festival of "first fruits" which honours unity of the black family. Small gifts are exchanged and candles lit.	enlist parents to prepare traditional foods
Orthodox Christmas	January 7	Eastern Orthodox	celebration of Christmas by the Eastern Orthodox Church. Kalady is the Christmas Eve celebration. Dinner consists of 12 meatless dishes and carols are sung during the celebration.	
Chinese New Year	January or February	Chinese	celebration of the beginning of the lunar year; usually lasts about one week	make Chinese lanterns -make egg drop soup and taste it -look through a Chinese picture book with children
Ashura	February	Moslem	Moslem holiday of thanksgiving representing Noah's departure from the Ark on Mount Ararat. According to legend, Noah's wife prepared sweet porridge or pudding for the journey	-make Ashura pudding using vanilla pudding mix and add dates, figs, nuts and currants.
Mardi Gras/ Carnival	February or March	Carribbean France Canada U.S. Some South American Countries	happy occasion before lent where people dress up in costumes, parade the streets and dance.	-have the children dress up in costumes -invite a steel band to play Caribbean music -enlist parents to teach the children few dances; -decorate classroom in streamers and balloons.

SPRING				
St. Patrick's Day	March 17	Irish	the anniversary of St. Patrick's death, the patron saint of Ireland	-make and wear green shamrocks -play with green play dough -read an Irish story or sing an Irish song
Naw-Ruz	March 21	Iranian Baha'i	celebration of the first day of spring and the renewal of life.	-sprout seeds in water, then transplant to soil, watch them grow -eat some bakhlava at snack time (a popular sweet pastry)
Hina Matsuri	Spring	Japan	doll or peach festival when the peach blossoms are in full bloom. Treasured dolls are beautifully dressed and arranged in a special place in house and peach blossoms are arranged around them.	-have children bring and dress their favourite doll -prepare and serve tea and light refreshments
Passover	March or April	Jewish	eight-day observance which recalls the Israelites' march to freedom from slavery. Special foods are eaten at Seder meal.	enlist parents' supports to prepare a seder table and the special meals.
Easter	April	Christian	commemorates the resurrection of Christ; represents the renewal of life; eggs, a universal symbol of new life are featured.	colouring of eggs -pictures of easter eggs and easter bunnies; special easter foods.
Holia or Basaat	Spring	Hindu	happy, lively spring festival celebrated before the onset of the monsoon rains. Friends often join together for dancing and feasting.	make different colours of confetti; enlist parents support to prepare special meals and to teach special dances.
SUMMER				
Vappu	May 1	Finnish	Carnival day	decorate your classrooms with streamers ad balloons; serve lemon-flavoured drink, 'sima', and sweet bread, 'tippaleipa'.
Obon Festival	July 14	Japanese	Buddhist festival of lighted lanterns	make Japanese lanterns out of construction paper

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PARENTS' NEEDS, PREFERENCES, AND CONCERNS ABOUT CHILD CARE: CASE STUDIES OF 336 CANADIAN FAMILIES

Final Report of a Study Commissioned
by the Task Force on Child Care

Conducted by Members of
The National Day Care Research Network

Principal Author: D.S. Lero, Ph.D.

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We wish to state that the opinions expressed in this report are our own, and do not necessarily reflect the views of members of the Federal Task Force on Child Care.

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CHAPTER 1.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

On May 30, 1984 the Honourable Judy Erola, then Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, announced the formation of a Federal Task Force on Child Care. Stimulated in large part by the dramatic rise in the number of women with young children entering the labour force over the past 15 years, the terms of reference for the Task Force included a mandate to:

> "examine and assess the need for child care services and paid parental leave in Canada as well as the adequacy of the current system in meeting this need, including ... affordability and availability to parents at different levels of income in various regions of the country of child care services which are consistent with their needs and preferences."

These terms of reference require a considerable amount of complex information which is not available on a national basis. The information that is available has many gaps.

Assessments of the need for child care are generally derived almost exclusively from labour force participation rates of women with children in various age groups. These estimates, when used as an indicator of the demand for child care, do not include the number of children in lone parent, father-headed homes who require child care; nor do they include families utilizing or desiring to utilize child care facilities or arrangements for other purposes. Child care for these families would be used to enable parents to continue their education, or to participate as volunteers in their communities; as a means of support to families experiencing chronic or acute health or social problems; or as a way of providing young children with opportunities to interact with other children in group settings designed to stimulate their cognitive development and encourage their personal competence.

Available statistics also do not provide information on more specific needs for child care services such as that need for full-time, versus part-time care arrangements, or the care needs of shift and weekend workers. A complete picture would also include seasonal and short-term need situations, in addition to those experienced on a regular basis throughout the year.

Similarly, comprehensive, reliable data on the arrangements actually being used is lacking at this time. Annual reports published by the National Day Care Information Centre (NDCIC) under the auspices of Health and Welfare, Canada, provide estimates of the number of available spaces in day care centres and supervised or approved family day care homes. Information based on actual enrollments, vacancy rates and waiting lists would provide a more accurate picture of the need or demand for these "formal" services in different areas in each province. Furthermore, estimates of the demand for spaces in formal day care settings have failed to account for the fact that a space may be utilized by more than one child on a part-time basis. One might also note that spaces in nursery schools and private before- and after-school programs are generally not included in the NDCIC reports, nor are statistics on the majority of child care arrangements - those arranged privately on a full- or part-time, paid or unpaid basis with relatives, neighbours, or others. In addition, the use of combinations of care arrangements for the same child (kindergarten and a relative, a relative and a sitter, etc.) has been largely ignored.

Two special surveys of child care arrangements have been conducted by Statistics Canada, most recently in 1981. The 1981 survey, unfortunately, combined all data into two groups: children aged 0-5 and 6-14. While the survey does indicate general patterns, the study also presents data collapsed across types of care in a way that does not provide more specific useful information for policy analysts or many others in the day care field. In summary, the data currently available do not provide any clear answer to the basic question, "Where are the children?"

Information about parents' preferences and opinions is gradually emerging in a variety of research studies in different parts of the country (Johnson, 1978; Lero, 1981; Pence & Goelman, 1985). However, methodological differences in the sampling procedures used and the way preference questions are asked can yield different results. A clearer understanding of parents' preferences among alternative child care arrangements requires considerable sensitivity of interviewers and researchers. A national perspective can only be attained when a large enough sample is utilized to allow preferences to be understood within the context of co-occurring differences in child, family, community and regional circumstances.

In summary, a comprehensive understanding of child care needs, preferences, and use patterns would demand a large-scale, national survey of Canadian families conducted by researchers who are attuned to the complexity of the ecology of child care; that is, the links between family, employment, child care, and community systems, and the way they influence each other. Such a study is currently being proposed by members of the National Day Care Research Network (see Lero, Pence, Brockman & Goelman, 1985).

Given the Task Force's immediate need to begin to understand the nature of Canadian families' child care needs, the kinds of arrangements currently being used, and parents' preferences and concerns about child care, the present study was undertaken. It consists of case studies based on personal interviews with parents in 336 families drawn from urban and rural sites spanning eight provinces. While the sample is not a representative sample of Canadian families, those who participated do span the diversity of economic, social, and geographic circumstances that exist in Canada, and that must be considered in social policy analysis and development. In-depth interviews using a case study approach was selected as the method that was most appropriate at this time, since it could highlight the complex nature of individual families' experiences and needs in different communities, while allowing observations of similarities and common experiences among families with infants, preschoolers and school-aged children to emerge.

1.1 Purposes and Uses of This Study

The specific objectives of this study were:

1. to identify the nature of individual families' child care needs, including:

- the purposes for which child care is used;
- the extent to which care is needed;
  - -on a full- and a part-time basis,
  - -regularly and irregularly,
  - -on weekends or in the evening,
  - -for special circumstances;

2. to examine the nature of child care arrangements now being used for infants, preschoolers and young school-aged children;

3. to identify some of the major factors affecting parents' choice or use of alternative arrangements that may be available to them; and

4. to explore parents' preferences and beliefs about what services, practices, and forms of assistance would best meet their own needs and support their children's development.

In keeping with those purposes, the definition of child care used in this study was deliberately broad. Our primary focus was on families' use of individuals and community resources as adjuncts to their own involvement and supervision of their children. Hence, while attending a nursery school or a kindergarten class might not be considered a form of "day care" in the strict sense of the word, such arrangements are used exclusively or in combination with other arrangements or services when parents are working or pursuing their education, or are involved in other tasks which render them unavailable or unlikely to be with their children at those times. Hence, they are being used for similar purposes as day care arrangements and/or as an "enrichment" experience for the children. As well, consideration of a broad array of child care arrangements provides a clearer picture of the nature of parents' needs or desires for diverse child care services and community resources than would otherwise be evident if, for example, only a narrow range of full-time arrangements were considered.

1.2 Uses of the Data

As indicated previously, this research study is a qualitative analysis of 336 families' child care needs, preferences and use patterns. The data and the results that are presented in this report serve to identify how a variety of factors interact to affect the nature of child care needs experienced in individual families and how families respond, given those needs and the resources that are available to them in their communities. We wish to emphasize that it would be a mistake to use the percentages presented in this report as if the results were obtained from a sample that allows statistical inferences to be made about the Canadian population in general or population subgroups. Hence, it would be inaccurate to assume that the opinions, experiences, or percentages of families using particular types of care obtained from this study's sample reflect those of Canadians in general or of all Canadian families with at least one child younger than six years of age.

The results are most useful as a means of highlighting the diversity that exists across families; a diversity which must be recognized in order to ensure that parents will ultimately have available to them a range of high-quality options among which they can choose in order to utilize child care arrangements that best meet their own and their children's needs. At the same time, the results can be used to indicate more general concerns and opinions voiced by participants about such aspects as the need for standards for caregivers, parent satisfaction with the current Child Care Tax Deduction, and other matters.

Ultimately, this study may be most useful when viewed as a necessary exploration of the complexity inherent in studying families' adaptations to changing role patterns and circumstances that directly affect their children's daily lives, and create or strengthen needs for community-based child care services and family resources, as well as changes in social policies on a national scale. An exploration of this sort is a timely step towards the development of more specific, focused studies that can provide clearer, more accurate quantitative results. It also helps identify problem areas or issues that have heretofore not been considered and which should be investigated further.

CHAPTER 2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 The Sampling Design

In order to assist the Task Force in meeting its mandate to examine child care needs, use patterns, and preferences among parents spanning a diversity of economic, geographic and social circumstances, a three-stage quota sampling design was considered the most appropriate given the limited resources and practical constraints.

Specific selection variables included in the sampling design at the primary level were geographic distribution and urban-rural location, leading to the selection of 14 sites, spanning eight provinces. On the secondary and tertiary levels, efforts were undertaken to ensure relatively equal numbers of families including a target child in each of three age groups: infants (0-2 years), preschoolers (2-5) and school-aged children (6-12); representation from upper-, middle-, and lower-income groups; and inclusion of single-parent families.

In summary, the sampling procedures involved the following steps:

1. selection of the sites by regional investigators in consultation with the principal investigator;

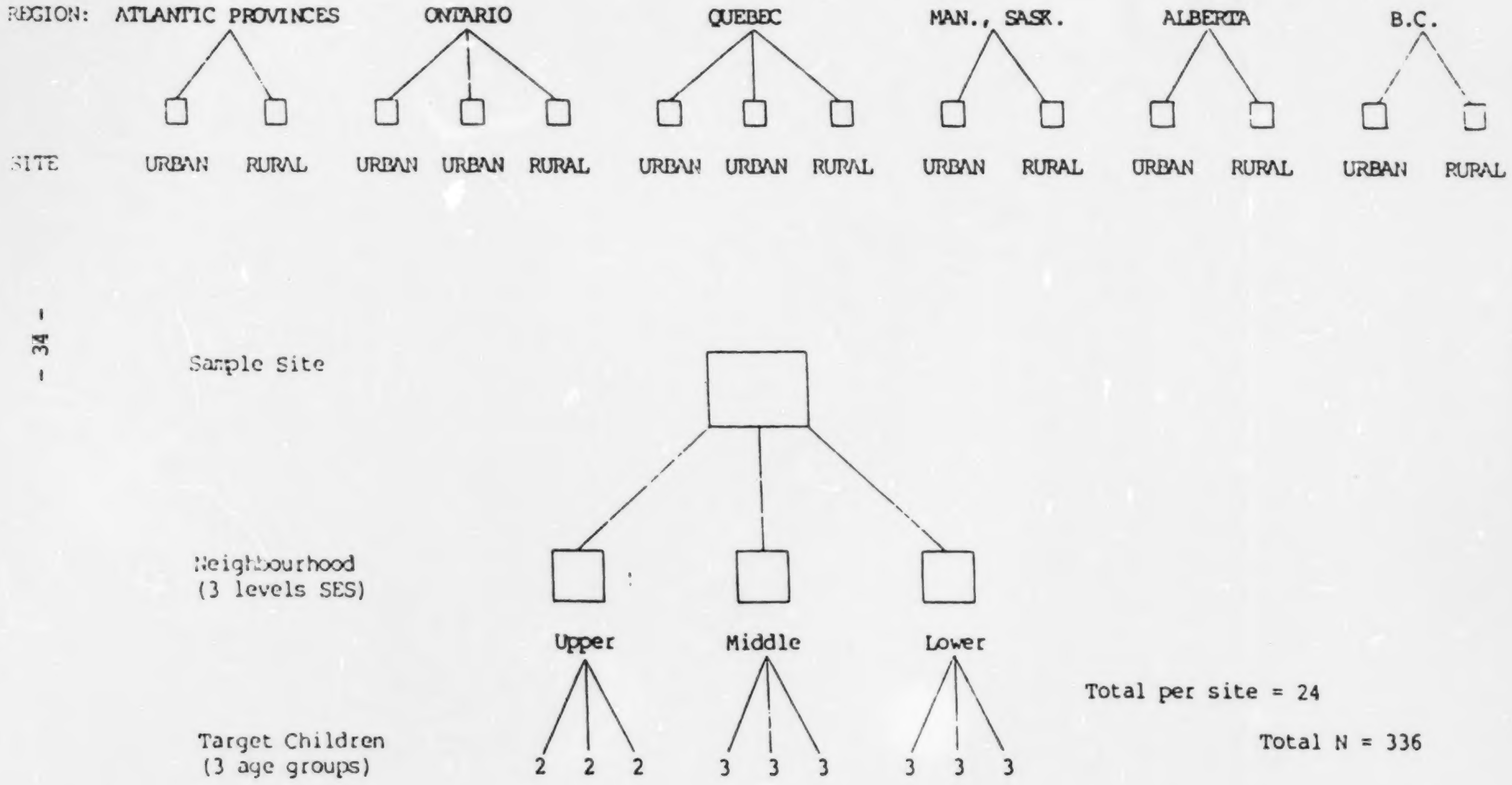
2. identification of neighbourhoods within sites corresponding to three socioeconomic levels; and

3. contact with potential participants by telephone or in person for pre-screening purposes and to explain the study and elicit cooperation.

The overall sampling design is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

OVERALL SAMPLING DESIGN


REGION:
ATLANTIC PROVINCES
ONTARIO
QUEBEC
MAN., SASK.
ALBERTA
B.C.
SITE
URBAN
RURAL
URBAN
URBAN
RURAL
URBAN
URBAN
RURAL
URBAN
RURAL
URBAN
RURAL
URBAN
RURAL
Sample Site
Neighbourhood
(3 levels SES)
Upper
Middle
Lower
Target Children
(3 age groups)
2 2 2
3 3 3
3 3 3
Total per site = 24
Total N = 336

2.2 Selected Sample Sites

Sites were selected using the following criteria:

1. Judged appropriateness as a representative urban/rural site for a particular province or region.

2. Inclusion of a significant number of families with children 12 years of age or younger.

3. Inclusion of a range of socioeconomic groups.

4. Practical and financial considerations, including proximity to the regional investigator and proximity to other chosen sites.

The 14 selected sites were as follows:

Atlantic Provinces

Urban - Halifax, Nova Scotia
Rural - Hillsborough, New Brunswick, and surrounding area

Ontario

Urban_1 - Hamilton, Ontario
Urban_2 - Kingston, Ontario
Rural - New Liskeard and surrounding area

Québec

Urban_1 - Montréal
Urban_2 - Outaouais region, including Hull, Aylmer, Gatineau
Rural - "Petite Nation" - including the towns and villages of Chénéville, Montpellier, Namur, Notre-Dame de la Paix, Papineauville, Ripon, and St. André Avellin.

Prairies

Urban - Winnipeg, Manitoba
Rural - Weyburn, Saskatchewan

Alberta

Urban - Edmonton
Rural - Barrhead and surrounding area

British Columbia

Urban - Vancouver
Rural - the "Boundary" area, including Grand Forks, B.C., and surrounding area

Each site selected has its own unique demographic and employment characteristics. In addition, provincial and municipal policies and resources interact to affect the availability of formal child care services at each site (particularly day care centres and licensed or approved family home day care, but also nursery schools and before- and after-school programs). In general, rural areas had few, if any, formal child care services. The urban areas varied in terms of the availability of formal child care services per capita, as well as in the availability of specific services (e.g., before- and after-school programs, centre care for infants, centres eligible to receive subsidized children or direct subsidies, etc). These ecological differences are important, and directly affect

- the nature of child care needs,
- use patterns, and
- parental preferences.

Analyses of needs, use patterns, and preferences by region and by similarity of sites would be useful in a larger study. Unfortunately, financial limitations and time constraints, as well as limitations imposed by the size of the sample, reduce the effectiveness and feasibility of such comparisons in this study. Obvious ecological influences are referred to anecdotally throughout the report.

2.3 Sampling and Recruitment of Participant Families

Once a site was chosen, efforts were made to identify at least three neighbourhoods within each site representing low-, middle-, and upper-income areas on the basis of assessed property values. Suggestions of appropriate neighbourhoods or census tracts were sometimes solicited from local Statistics Canada offices or from municipal authorities or local early childhood consultants. Screening procedures varied slightly across regions, but generally employed door-to-door screening of every fifth home or apartment. The purpose of the study was explained to potential respondents who were asked a number of screening questions related mostly to the age of children present, and the number of parents in the home. Potential respondents were also asked whether they knew of other families residing in the area with children in particular age groups; thus, snowball sampling was also included as a method of locating potential respondents.

2.4 Response Rates

Overall we had a very high response rate. More than 90% of eligible families who were contacted agreed to be interviewed. The most reticent participants were found among the most wealthy neighbourhoods and among single parents. Some of the former were slightly skeptical and suspicious, while the latter group sometimes lacked energy and time for the interviews. More than a few families who originally agreed to participate if contacted expressed disappointment when they were not selected.

2.5 Data Collection Procedures

The data was collected via an in-person, face-to-face interview, usually with the mother. Occasionally the father was the primary respondent; approximately 20% of the interviews were conducted with both parents.

Interviews were conducted mostly in the respondent's home. Homemakers were usually interviewed during the day; working parents, in the evening or on weekends. Seven per cent of the interviews were conducted at the parent's workplace at their request.

The interviews varied in length, depending upon the number of children in the home, the mother's work status, and other factors. Time ranged from 40 minutes to more than two hours, averaging about an hour and a quarter in length. Interviews were conducted in French for francophone families in Québec. All other interviews were in English, with the exception of one Vietnamese family who brought in their own interpreter.

CHAPTER 3.0 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARTICIPATING FAMILIES

As mentioned previously, the purposes for which this study was conducted and constraints based on financial and time considerations led to the use of non-probability sampling techniques. While the sample includes families who are diverse in terms of their demographic characteristics, they are not a representative sample of the Canadian population or its subgroups for statistical purposes.

Because the obtained results reflect the particular nature of the families who were interviewed, it is important to describe in some detail.

3.1 Family Composition

3.1.1 Adult Members

The majority of parents we interviewed live in nuclear families, consisting of one or both parents (or partners) and their children. Approximately three-quarters (76.2%) were two-parent families. Among the 80 single-parent families who participated, 74 were headed by women; there were six single-parent fathers. Twenty-four households (7.1%) included one or more other adults in addition to the parents. In most cases these were grandparents, although some were adult siblings, adult children, or boarders. These extended households were almost exclusively found in rural areas.

3.1.2 Family Size

Among the 336 sample families, 137 (or 40.8%) included only one child 12 years of age or younger (the target child). Thirty-seven per cent of the families included two children aged 12 or younger, while families with three or more children in this age range made up 21.7% of the sample.

In addition to children who are permanent household members, 14 families had children who lived with them or visited occasionally. These were children of a previous marriage and/or foster children, who might require or provide child care depending on their age and the family's lifestyle.

3.1.3 Target Children

Families were selected in part on the basis of having at least one child younger than 13 years of age. The identified target child was an infant (less than 2 years old) in 108 families, a preschooler (2-5) in 110 families, and a school-aged child (6-12) in 118 families.

In fact, infants ranged from 2 months to 24 months; 38% were 1 year old or less and 62% were toddlers up to and including 24 months of age. The 110 preschoolers included ten children younger than 3, seventy 3- and 4-year-olds, and thirty 5-year-olds. The school-aged children in this sample were fairly equally distributed in the 6-12-year age range. The majority of this group (83, or 70.3%) were 10 years old or younger; the remainder were 11 or had just had their 12th birthday. A slight bias towards younger school-aged children, while not intended, was perhaps fortuitous since 10 years of age seems to be an important turning point in parents' views as to when children can manage by themselves on a more or less regular basis after school and for other short periods of time.

3.2 Urban-Rural Location

In accordance with the sampling design, 192 families lived in large urban areas, and 144 resided in smaller towns or villages or on farms in rural areas. For the purposes of this study, a rural area was defined as an area with a population of less than 15,000 people, at least one hour away by car from a city with a population of more than 30,000.

Fifty families in the rural group (14.9% of the total sample) were actually engaged in farming on a part- or full-time basis.

3.3 Family Socioeconomic Status

Accurate assessments of a family's socioeconomic status are increasingly difficult to make. Income, occupation, education, and family living circumstances are no longer as congruent as they once were. Furthermore, traditional assessments based only on a father's occupation or income are no longer the most accurate assessment when the mother is also employed.

Pre-screening based on neighbourhood property values or farm acreage suggested that low-, middle-, and upper-income families made up about 37%, 36%, and 27% of the sample, respectively. While pre-screening judgments were not always accurate for every family, they indicate the general distribution of sample families' economic circumstances.

In light of previous research findings, we endeavoured to determine both the mother's employment income (if working), and the family's total income. Ethical guidelines in our respective universities and in our professions stipulate that participants in surveys must be given an opportunity to refuse to answer questions that they feel are of a private nature. As a result, there was some missing data on the income questions. In addition, accurate assessments of income must rely on a series of questions regarding different income sources, which were not asked in this study. Assessment of farm families' incomes is exceedingly difficult.

As a result, the income data that was reported is only partly reliable. It is quite clear that the families we interviewed ranged from those with very limited incomes who depended on welfare funds, to families in which both parents were active, successful professionals, each of whom would be expected to earn $40,000 or more.

Total family gross income as provided by about 75% of participants was as follows:

Income Range	Number of Families	Adjusted Percent Age*
$ 0 - 8,999	12	4.8
$ 9,000 - 14,999	27	10.7
$15,000 - 19,999	25	9.9
$20,000 - 24,999	16	6.3
$25,000 - 29,999	27	10.7
$30,000 - 39,999	55	21.8
$40,000 - 49,999	30	11.7
$50,000 - 59,999	29	11.5
$60,000+	33	13.1

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* Based on n = 252

3.4 Parents' Employment Characteristics

Characteristics of each parent's employment status and the nature of their work formed a significant part of the interview, since they affect child care needs dramatically. Information was collected separately for the respondent (mothers and single-parent fathers) and for the spouse (where applicable).

It was found that 143 of the respondents normally worked on a full-time basis and 83 on a part-time basis. When allowances are made for the single parent fathers (all of whom were employed on a full-time basis), the percentage of full-time working mothers was determined to be 41.5%, the percentage of part-time working mothers was calculated to be 25.1%, and the overall labour force participation (including women actively seeking employment, but not working at the time of the interview) was estimated to be 72.4%.

This estimate is somewhat higher than current labour force estimates, and may be due to the proportion of upper income families included in our sample. One other factor affecting our calculations was our decision to count farm wives as part-time employees if they regularly performed such chores as caring for animals, bookkeeping and secretarial work, and/or selling farm produce.

Unfortunately, data on the spouse's employment status are not available for the Québec families in our sample, because of a discrepancy in the interpretation of instructions that arose in translation. Analysis based on non-Québec families produced the following breakdown of the sample:

Two-Parent Families (n=191)	Percentage of Two-Parent Families	Percentage of Sample (minus Québec)
Both parents work full-time	37.2	28.1
1 parent full-time, 1 part-time	37.7	28.5
1 parent full-time, 1 at home	18.3	13.8
Both parents part-time	3.7	2.8
Other	3.1	2.4

Single-Parent Families (n=192)	Percentage of One-Parent Families	Percentage of Sample (minus Québec)
Parent works full-time	50.0	12.3
Parent works part-time	40.3	9.9
Parent at home	9.7	2.4

Further discussion of employment data is presented in Chapter 4. Further information about sample families is available upon request.

CHAPTER 4.0 CHILD CARE NEEDS

A major objective of this study was to identify the extent of families' child care needs and to investigate the nature of those needs. Efforts were made to determine:

a) the reasons parents utilize child care - i.e., the functions child care serves - and
b) the specific needs evident in this cross-section of families.

4.1 The Concept of Need

An accurate and full portrait of the extent and nature of families' needs for assistance with child care is essential for effective social planning.

As indicated earlier, most assessments of child care needs are based on labour force data, particularly maternal employment rates. Table 1 presents the most recent Labour Force data available from Statistics Canada (November, 1984).

The numbers, when added together, indicate that there are:

425 000 women in the labour force with at least one child under 3 years of age;

307 000 women in the labour force without children under 3, but with at least one child 3-5 years old; and

938 000 women in the labour force without preschool-aged children, but with at least one child 6-15 years old.

Table 1

Participation of Women in the Labour Force by Labour Force Status of Husband and Family Composition

Labour Force (in thousands)

	Employed			Un-employed	Participation Rate (%)
	Total	Full-Time	Part-Time		
Married Women with Husband Employed					
With children under 16 years	1,355	920	435	154	61.7
With preschool-aged children	621	410	211	81	56.6
- with children under 3 years	369	249	120	49	55.0
- without children under 3 years but with at least 1 child 3-5 years	252	161	90	31	59.2
Without preschool-aged children, but with at least 1 child 6-15 years	734	510	224	73	66.8
Married Women with Husband Unemployed or Not in the Labour Force					
With children under 16 years	120	92	28	35	50.3
With preschool-aged children	57	42	14	16	47.3
- with children under 3 years	37	29	8	10	47.5
- without children under 3 years but with at least 1 child 3-5 years	20	13	6	6	46.8
Without preschool-aged children but with at least 1 child 6-15 years	63	49	14	19	53.3
Lone-Parent Mothers - No Husband Present					
With children under 16 years	195	156	40	47	63.5
With preschool-aged children	54	40	15	21	52.0
- with children under 3 years	19	13	6	11	45.8
- without children under 3 years but with at least 1 child 3-5 years	35	27	9	10	57.1
Without preschool-aged children but with at least 1 child 6-15 years	141	116	25	26	70.6

Source: Adapted from data presented in The Labour Force, November, 1984. Statistics Canada.

Participation rates of women with children of various ages across all groups are calculated to be:

53.6% for women with children under 3 years of age;
57.9% for women without children under 3, but with at least one child aged 3-5; and
66.1% for women without preschool children, but with at least one child 6-15 years of age.

Maternal employment, however, is only one factor among many that contributes to families needing assistance and support with child care. Table 2 presents an overview of the variety of purposes for which supplemental child care may be used.

Table 2

Purposes/Functions Served by Supplemental Child Care

1. To provide appropriate care when both parents (or a lone parent) are working, or engaged in an employment-related activity, such as:

   - full-time employment,
   - part-time employment,
   - attending a conference or travelling out of town in connection with one's work,
   - engaged in farm labour,
   - looking for work.

2. To provide appropriate care when parents are continuing their education or enrolled in a training or re-training program.

3. To provide care for children and support to families with special needs, such as:

   - families in which one or both parents have chronic health problems,
   - families experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, significant distress,
   - families with a background of, or high risk of, child abuse and neglect,
   - families with a handicapped or chronically-ill child.

4. To provide children with opportunities to participate in experiences designed to stimulate their physical, intellectual and emotional development, promote personal competence, and enable the development of social skills through interactions with other children and adults.

5. To provide children with special needs (e.g., retardation, sensory impairments, etc.) with an opportunity to receive specially designed stimulation and remediation in a setting that allows social interaction with other children and adults.

6. To provide appropriate child care as a supportive resource to families at specific times of peak need occasioned by such circumstances as:

- a family illness or emergency,
- childbirth,
- seasonal employment,
- lack of availability of regular caregivers,
- school or program closings during summer months, professional development days, holidays, etc.

7. To provide appropriate care when parents are engaged in:

   - volunteer or community activities,
   - religious or ethnic groups/activities,
   - personal or social tasks or activities,
   - family tasks (with, or on behalf of family members) at which time it is appropriate or desirable to utilize supplemental child care.

While not every category was evident in our sample, the vast majority were. Reasons for using supplemental child care can be ordered along several continua or dimensions, such as:

- the regularity with which care is needed,
- whether the needs are perceived to be primarily parent- or child- oriented (an artificial distinction in this author's opinion), and
- the extent to which these functions fall within accepted classifications of "legitimate" child care needs.

Traditional economic and social service definitions of need (such as those contained in the Canada Assistance Plan) are premised mainly on the assumption that child care is needed only when both parents are (or a single parent is) "necessarily absent" from the home; i.e., engaged in employment or education activities which enable parents to "overcome or alleviate the causes and effects of poverty." A second accepted definition of need is evident on the basis of social needs, which justify the cost (use) of child care as a means of social service intervention to prevent, overcome or alleviate conditions believed to be seriously detrimental to the development of the child. Although several other categories presented in Table 2 may also be "acceptable" under certain circumstances, traditional economic and social service perspectives continue to define needs for supplemental child care as arising from, or symptomatic of, exceptional circumstances, rather than viewing the use of supplemental child care as a common method of supporting families and providing care and stimulation to children as needed or desired by family circumstances, and/or parental preferences. Hence, a "traditional" needs perspective would interpret a homemaker's desire to enroll her preschool child in a nursery school for the benefits it would provide to the child and the time it would give her to attend to personal needs and family tasks, as a "luxury" rather than a need. In fact, much of the traditional needs perspective assumes that at least one parent (usually mother) should be with a preschool child or infant every moment, and that the use of supplemental child care, if not required by stringent economic or social circumstances is, if not wrong, selfish, or incongruent with the role of a good parent, at least a "luxury," and hence not a "legitimate need," deserving government support or involvement.

Many of the parents in our sample recognize their "needs" and their children's "needs" for high quality supplemental care, whether used on a regular or irregular basis, as a fundamental type of support that enables them to be happier, more effective individuals and parents. Hence, sample families frequently spoke of their needs for, and use of, supplemental care arrangements both for periods of time when parents were unavailable, and for other purposes as outlined in Table 2.

The remainder of this chapter presents specific data on the extent and nature of family needs for child care, viewed from this broader perspective.

4.2 Needs for Care Based on Parents' Labour Force Participation and Educational Pursuits

Data presented in Section 3.0 revealed that 141 respondents (42% of the sample) were employed full-time, and that an additional 81 respondents (24.1%) were employed on a part-time basis. (Women who live on farms and engage in regular farm-related work were also classified as part-time workers.) These totals do not include five mothers who are members of the labour force, but were home on maternity leave at the time of the interviews, nor the 19 respondents who said they were actively seeking employment.

Our sample also included 39 respondents who were students - 20 on a full-time basis, and 19 part-time. Half of the students also held jobs. Data were then recoded so that respondents could be classified into three groups - those involved outside the home on a full-time basis, a part-time basis, or not at all (based on employment and educational activities only). Results indicated that among the respondents in our sample, 50% were employed or were students full-time, 25.2% were either working or pursuing their education on a part-time basis, and another quarter (24.8%) were neither employed nor pursuing education goals.

Table 3 presents respondents' work/student status by age of the target child.

Table 3

Respondents' Involvement in Employment and Educational Activities by Age of Target Child

	Work/Student Status		
Age of Target Child[a]	Full-time[b]	Part-time[c]	At Home
under 2 years	41.2	30.4	28.4
2-5 years old	50.9	22.6	26.4
6-12 years old	57.3	22.7	20.0
Total Sample	50.0	25.2	24.8

Notes:
[a] The family may include older or younger children besides the target child.
[b] Includes full-time employees, full-time students, and respondents who work part-time and are part-time students.
[c] Includes part-time employees, farm wives who work on the farm, and part-time students.

Interestingly, while expected differences among parents of younger and older children are evident, they do not appear to be as dramatic as might have been anticipated on the basis of labour force data alone.

We believe this type of joint consideration of educational activities and employment provides a more accurate picture of child care needs that are likely to be of a continuing, regular nature.

4.2.1 Employment and Student Schedules

Most labour force studies fail to ascertain the nature of parents' work schedules and specific work hours. We found that among our employed respondents, 33% had schedules that varied to a greater or lesser extent.

26 respondents worked a regular non-standard hours shift or regularly rotating cycles. Examples of such positions include cocktail waitress, group home coordinator, nurse, and restaurant cook.

29 worked on an irregular schedule, sometimes on call. These positions include bank teller, nurse, telephone operator in rural areas, veterinarian's assistant, and casual sales personnel.

15 respondents set their own hours, partially or completely. Examples included a free-lance bookkeeper, a mother who works for a courier service, and a free-lance typist who works out of her home. Farm wives are also able to schedule at least some tasks according to their own needs and desires.

Students' schedules vary as well. College and university students may have different schedules on different days, and sometimes at night. These schedules may also change each semester.

Clearly, parents whose schedules vary or who work non-standard hours require flexible care arrangements that can accommodate their needs.

4.2.2 Weekend and Evening Hours

Of the 212 employed respondents in this sample, 28 (13.2%) worked at least one weekend day, and 38 (17.9%) worked at least one evening in the week preceding the study. Among weekend and evening workers were nurses, waitresses, a chambermaid, sales personnel, a bank teller, and a research consultant. As well, a small number of professional respondents (a lawyer, a university professor, and an administrator of Social and Community Services) often worked in the evening either in their office or at home. One respondent had been away from home 2.5 days in the week preceding the interview, to attend a conference.

Parents who regularly work or attend school in the evenings or on weekends generally do not have access to formal child care services at those times. Spouses, relatives, and sitters are parents' main alternatives.

4.3 Needs Based on Parents' Perceptions of the Value of Social Stimulation and Cognitive Enrichment

While many parents who utilize group arrangements (a nursery school or day care centre) do so when they are working or otherwise unavailable, the choice of a group care setting in contrast to care provided by a relative or babysitter was often related to parents' perceptions of the benefits of such arrangements, especially for a 4- or 5-year-old child. In such cases, parents mentioned that their child "needed" more social stimulation and was ready to participate with other children in supervised learning and play experiences. This, then, became an evaluative criterion in choosing between alternative child care arrangements.

Similar reasoning led some full-time homemakers to seek out part-time nursery schools in their communities or to consider part-time attendance at a high-quality day care centre if such a space was available and affordable.

Three families in our sample (two of whom included full-time homemakers) utilized group care settings as a way of providing developmental and social stimulation for a child with special needs. In such cases, trained teachers and resource personnel provide specific activities geared to the child's individual needs, while enabling the child to participate with other children in play and social interactions.

4.4 Peak Needs and Special Circumstances

As indicated in Table 2, child care may be required as a supportive resource at specific times of peak need or special circumstances. When such needs can be anticipated ahead of time, relatives and/or neighbours often volunteer. Grandparents, when available, often serve as a back-up support on such occasions as childbirth or when a child is ill and unable to attend school or be looked after in the usual manner. Some of the circumstances parents encountered in our sample were:

- professional development days (for school-aged children),
- instances when a child was ill,
- circumstances when their normal child care arrangement fell through,
- summer-time and school vacations, and
- peak working times for farm families.

When other arrangements cannot be made, such circumstances can result in parental absenteeism from work or studies.

4.4.1 Professional Development Days

Most Boards of Education utilize a number of days each year for the purpose of professional development of teachers, principals and other school staff. On such occasions, working parents need to make other arrangements for their children's care.

When working parents in our sample were asked what they usually do about professional development days:

46 respondents said that either they or their spouse stayed home,
17 relied on a relative,
35 arranged for their child to attend a day care or community centre,
12 allowed their child to be alone or with an older sibling, and
3 brought their child to work with them.

Among the 39 students in our sample, four stated they had missed classes in the last six months to stay home on professional development days.

4.4.2 Care When a Child Is Ill

Parents are even more likely to take time off from work or school if a child is ill. In such circumstances:

152 respondents said that either they or their spouse would stay home,
25 would arrange for a non-relative to care for their child - perhaps the child's usual sitter, if she provided care in the family home,
21 would rely on a relative,
3 said they would leave their child alone, if the child was not too ill.

4.4.3 Care Needed Because a Regular Child Care Arrangement Is Not Available

Parents usually consider the reliability of a care arrangement as a critical factor in decision-making, and some who have had bad experiences with sitters turn to group care, in part for this reason. While professional development days, civic holidays, and vacation times do occur, they are predictable and parents can plan ahead of time. Parents experience more difficulty and more anxiety when a sitter or relative calls in sick, has an unexpected family crisis, or announces on short notice that she is taking a job or moving or for some other reason won't be able to care for the child. If the care provided is temporarily unavailable, the task is to find a back-up arrangement - quickly. Under other circumstances, a whole new arrangement must be found, perhaps in addition to a temporary back-up.

Among sample families in this study, 19 mothers reported having lost a total of 88 work-days in the past six months because child care arrangements fell through, and ten spouses were similarly affected, losing a total of 44 work-days. Seven of the 39 students also reported having missed classes in the six months preceding the study because a regular child care arrangement had fallen through.

Three facts are worth mentioning at this point. The first is that finding suitable care when a child is ill or when a child care arrangement falls through is often very stressful, particularly for families with no available relatives and few social supports in their immediate area. In cases where parents normally use a combination of care arrangements or providers, juggling and rejuggling must be done, and logistics worked out. As an example, one parent in our sample whose sitter usually picked up her 5-year-old child after kindergarten, drove him home, and then cared for him there, would have to find someone not only to care for the child, but someone who could pick up the child at school - or some way of getting the child to the caregiver. Other situations involving two children sometimes resulted in parents having to make two different emergency arrangements at the last minute.

A second point is that most parents who must take time off from work, either because a child is ill, or because of difficulties with child care arrangements, or for some other child-related reason most often do so at the expense of their own sick days or vacation time. Several mothers mentioned that they are reluctant to admit to an employer that they are staying home for a child-related reason, lest they upset their employers or even jeopardize their jobs. Advocates of parental leave policies and greater understanding and support of parents by employers may note the desirability of allowing parents some flexibility, and perhaps some days allocated to parental needs.

The third fact is that very few communities currently have drop-in day care centres or community resources such as information and referral centres that parents can approach on short notice in order to obtain the name of a qualified home day care provider. Vancouver was one exception in this study, and several parents, both homemakers and employed workers, mentioned occasionally using drop-in centres and being grateful for their availability. (Note: Family home day care agencies could serve a similar function, but were rarely encountered by members of this sample.)

4.4.4 Summer-Time Care

The summer months are another period of time that must be considered when assessing child care needs. Parents who work full-time all year face a relatively long period during which schools are closed. Usual caregivers may decide to take the summer off or go on vacation, during which time other care will be required. On the other hand, some parents themselves stop working during the summer months; others (such as farmers and those whose work is seasonal, or those in recreational or hospitality industries) work more hours in summer than at other times.

Among sample families in this study, 134 respondents said that their work pattern or work hours changed. Fifty-nine working mothers had or took leave time during the summer months, 23 reduced their hours; 13 increased their hours (including 5 mothers who began work during the summer months), and 34 experienced some other change.

Fewer spouses were affected. Seventy-two spouses (28.7%) experienced a change in work hours or work status. Thirteen had or took leave time, 24 reduced their hours, 8 worked more hours. Twenty-five experienced other changes - some of which involved farmers dropping an off-farm job and working more hours on the farm.

Parents who used any form of non-school care during the school year were asked whether their care arrangement continued to be available throughout the whole summer. Seventy-two per cent said yes; 28% no.

Families were observed to use a wide variety of community and family resources during the summer months as a substitute for, or supplement to their usual care methods. Fifty-two families with an infant (not necessarily a target child) utilized at least one new arrangement over the summer months, 23 used two new methods, and 10 used three methods of providing care for their infant or toddler. Among the most popular caregivers were relatives, sitters, and neighbours, in that order. Summer-only day care centre arrangements were rare. Eighteen infants stayed with relatives (usually grandparents) for at least some portion of the summer months.

Fifty-six families reported using no special child care for their preschool child during the summer months, while 94 families used at least one "special" arrangement during the summer; with 64 having used two methods, and 32 having used three or more different summer care arrangements. Relatives were involved 58.5% of the time, and provided care in their homes to 39 preschool children. Sitters were employed by 27 families, and neighbours and friends provided care in 16 cases. Some preschool children participated in one or more summer programs. Twenty-six participated in community recreation programs, 6 attended summer camps, and 8 were enrolled in a nursery school or day care centre to cover this period of time. Eight children were looked after part of the time by an older sibling; six young children spent at least some time in the care of an ex-spouse.

Data were also obtained for school-aged children in two age categories: 6-9 and 10-13 years old. "Special" (i.e., summer-only) care arrangements were made for the vast majority of school-aged children. Staying with a relative or being cared for by a relative was still common, but more often supplemented children's participation in community recreation programs and day camps - especially in the case of 6-9-year-olds. Correspondingly, sitters and neighbours provided summer care to a smaller proportion of these children than was the case with infants and preschoolers. Residential (overnight) summer camps were used by 20 families; ex-spouses provided care in a small number of circumstances. Care by a sibling was noted as a part-time summer care method for fifteen 6-9-year-olds and seven 10-13-year-olds.

Rural families frequently commented on the need for additional community programs for preschoolers and school-aged children during the summer months, as well as on the need for transportation to those facilities. In addition, approximately 15 farm families mentioned times of peak needs - haying or calving seasons, for example, and their desire for full-time in-home care at such times. A number of them regularly attempt to attract a local teenager or older lady for this purpose if a relative is not available. At least eight farm families described finding care at such times as "difficult" or "very difficult."

4.5 Care Needed to Enable Parents to Participate in Community Activities and to Attend to Family and Personal Needs

A final category to consider is that which normally falls outside of traditional need conceptions. Yet more and more, people are attempting to define some part of their lives outside parent and worker roles to allow them to participate in their community, express or develop a talent, upgrade their knowledge, maintain physical fitness, or simply spend time with friends or in social activities. Indeed, some would suggest that a life devoted exclusively to worker and parent roles is, in the long run, unhealthy. In order for a parent to engage in such activities, some form of child care must be made available or arranged.

Among the 336 respondents in our sample, 178 (53%) said that they regularly spend time involved in at least one "voluntary" activity. These activities included a broad range, some of which were:

- volunteer work
  (at a rape crisis centre, a day care centre, a hospital auxiliary, charitable organizations, etc.);
- sports and recreation activities
  (personal fitness, curling, bowling, etc.);
- church-related activities
  (teaching at Sunday school, participating in the choir, attending various church-related meetings and functions, etc.);
- community meetings
  (generally service- or agency-related, including participation on the board of directors/parent board of a local day care centre);
- political involvement in campaigns, etc.; and
- child-related activities
  (being a Brownie leader, coaching the basketball team, etc., usually involving one child in the family).

While some of these activities occur during day-time hours, the majority (87%) take place in the evening or on weekends, typically once a week. Most often care for children is not provided, and must be arranged by the parent. Usually care is provided in the child's home either by a spouse or by a relative, neighbour or paid sitter. The more involved a parent was in such activities, the more likely it seemed that a paid sitter was employed.

In addition to activities such as those mentioned above, parents do participate in social activities, and have always relied on relatives, neighbours and/or sitters to enable them to go to a party, spend the evening out, or see a movie. These types of care arrangements are generally not a concern of provincial day care authorities, yet concern about the quality of these evening arrangements was voiced by several respondents, one of whom commented that her day care arrangements were fine, but finding good sitters when she needed them in the evening was "the pits." Several single parents on limited incomes commented not only on the difficulty they had finding good, available caregivers, but also on the cost of such care.

In addition to voluntary activities that parents may engage in on a regular or scheduled basis, occasions frequently arise when parents rely on their spouse and/or a relative or neighbour who can fill in for them from time to time when they need to attend to personal or family matters. Examples of such instances run the gamut from medical and dental appointments for oneself or one of the children in the family, to looking after another family member, attending a parent-teacher conference, getting one's hair cut, or going shopping. At such times it may be inappropriate or undesirable for a parent to have his/her child in tow, especially if the child is not feeling well and/or the weather is bad, etc.

Such occasions are usually irregular, and care arrangements of this sort may not be problematic to families who have maintained a strong interpersonal support network of family and friends. They can be a problem to those single parents (and to other families) who have few supportive links in their community. Under such circumstances, parents (both working parents and homemakers) would benefit from drop-in centres and/or a referral centre or co-op babysitting service. Several homemaker respondents spontaneously commented on the need for such resources in their communities.

4.6 Child Care Needs: An Overview

This chapter has presented both a conceptual overview of the variety of purposes served by supplemental child care arrangements and descriptive data on the extent and nature of sample families' child care needs.

On the basis of respondents' work and/or educational commitments, full-time care was required for:

41.2%	of families with a child under two years of age,
50.9%	of families with a target child between 2 and 5, and
57.3%	of families with a child 6-12 years old.

Part-time care was required for:

30.4%	of families with a child under 2,
22.6%	of families with a preschooler, and
22.7%	of families with a school-aged child 12 years or younger.

Regular evening and/or weekend care was required every week by at least 25% of sample families for work-related reasons, and by more than half of all respondents to enable them to participate in community activities of various types or to meet their own personal needs for stimulation and interaction with others.

Other needs were examined, including that for back-up care arrangements on professional development days, when children are ill, and on occasions when regular care arrangements fall through. The need for summer care was also examined.

Chapter 5 examines the nature of the care arrangements currently being used by sample families, and Chapter 8 includes a presentation of parents' views as to what types of care services and other forms of assistance are most needed or desired in their communities.

CHAPTER 5.0 CURRENT CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS

A major objective of this study was to accurately determine the extent to which families use various kinds of child care arrangements. In this chapter we present information about care arrangements used on a regular and irregular basis, the number of different arrangements individual families used in the week preceding the interview, and the main types of care used for infants, preschoolers, and school-aged children when their parents are working, at school, or engaged in other activities. Information about the costs of such arrangements is also presented.

In interpreting these data, it is important to bear in mind that actual use patterns reflect not only parents' preferences among alternatives, but also the extent to which other child care methods are actually available, feasible and/or affordable alternatives at the time parents need them.

As an example, care by the father while a mother is working is, with rare exception, not possible in single-parent families, and only possible if the father is home when the mother is working. Similarly, care by a relative may not be a possible or viable alternative if relatives do not live nearby or if those who do, are themselves working or otherwise unavailable. Centre care for infants and toddlers and before- and after-school programs for school-aged children are limited in many communities. Under such circumstances, use patterns reflect this fact; larger proportions of children are cared for by neighbours, relatives, and paid sitters. Furthermore, child care use patterns in communities offering public kindergarten and junior kindergarten programs through the school system are likely to be different from those observed in communities without such programs. In sum, actual use patterns result from a complex interplay among child, family, employment, and community variables, including federal and provincial policies, programs and funding mechanisms which affect the availability, affordability and quality of alternative care arrangements.

5.1 The Number of Arrangements Used Last Week

Not surprisingly, when every conceivable type of child care arrangement is considered (both regular and irregular, including care by a spouse, school time, etc.) very few families are identified as relying solely and exclusively on care by the mother all week long. Data analysis for this section of the report was conducted using two categories of care: non-respondent care and non-parental care. Non-respondent care is care other than that provided by the mother or single-parent father. Non-parental care is care provided by neither parent. (In the case of single-parent families, non-respondent care is synonymous with non-parental care.) In order to ease interpretation, the term "non-maternal care" will be used in lieu of "non-respondent care," and "mother" will be substituted for "respondent." Only 18 of the 336 families in this study (5.4%) manifested a pattern of exclusive mother-only care. The range of child care types that we examined was deliberately broad, and included all possibilities listed in Table 4.

Table 4

Types of Child Care Arrangements

1. In own home by spouse
2. In own home by child's brother or sister
3. In own home by relative (other than spouse or child's sibling)
4. In own home by non-relative
5. In another home by relative
6. In another home by non-relative
7. In a nursery school/preschool
8. In a community day care centre
9. In a workplace day care centre
10. In a co-op program (babysitting cooperative)
11. In a before- or after-school program
12. In a recreational program (e.g., YMCA)
13. At organized activities (scouts, brownies, music lessons, etc.)
14. Care by parent at work
15. Child stays by him/herself
16. Child attends school

Note: Some parents prefer and/or use combinations of the above.

The number of regular arrangements used by families in the week preceding the study is shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Percentage of Families Using One, a Combination of, or No Child Care Arrangements Last Week

Age Group	Number of Arrangements							
	Non-Maternal Care[a]				Non-Parental Care[b]			
	None	1	2	3	None	1	2	3
Infant	25.0	42.6	28.7	3.7	44.5	36.0	17.6	1.9
Preschool[c]	15.5	6.4	52.7	25.4	23.6	13.7	42.7	20.0
School-aged[c]	0.0	37.3	31.4	31.3	0.0	55.1	22.1	22.8

Notes: All percentages exclude care provided by a parent at work and instances where the child is alone. Figures pertain only to care used during the week. Care provided on the weekend was counted only if the mother was working at that time.

[a] Care other than that provided by mother or single-parent father.

[b] Care other than that provided by either parent.

[c] Including school as an arrangement.

These data indicate that care provided by a combination of caregivers and caregiving/educational settings is quite common. Combinations of two or more non-maternal care arrangements were used by 32.4%, 78.1%, and 62.7% of families with infants, preschoolers, and school-aged children respectively. Combinations of two or more non-parental care arrangements (including school) were used by 19.5% of families with an infant, 62.7% of families with a preschooler, and 44.9% of families with a school-aged child.

Some of these combinations reflect the use of a main type of care during the day (or after school for school-aged children) and an additional arrangement used in the evening when one or both parents participate in voluntary activities. In other cases, a combination of arrangements is necessary to cover parents' working hours when a caregiver is only available for part of the time that is needed, or when children attend a program that is only offered part-time or has specified, limited hours. This circumstance was particularly noticeable in the case of preschool children enrolled in part-time nursery schools and kindergarten programs.

Parents gave several reasons for using a combination of arrangements. In descending order of frequency they were:

1. to cover work hours,
2. as a supplement when a spouse or relative is not available,
3. as the best way to meet the child's needs,
4. cost,
5. no choice (probably includes #1 and/or #2 above),
6. to supplement a kindergarten or nursery program.

5.2 Care Arrangements Used on a Regular and an Irregular Basis

In order to distinguish between care used regularly and irregularly, separate analyses were performed. Regular care was not necessarily provided every day, or even for very many hours each week, but did indicate some planned negotiation and reliance by the mother or both parents on a caregiver's or program's availability at certain times.

Among sample families:

- 75% of mothers with a child under 2 utilized at least one non- maternal care arrangement on a regular basis,
- 84% of families with at least one preschooler did so, and
- 63% of families with a school-aged child used at least one regular non-maternal child care method other than school.

Regular non-parental care (other than school) was used by:

- 58% of families with an infant,
- 82% of families with a target preschool child, and
- 48% of families with a school-aged child.

Regular care arrangements were used not only by families with working mothers, but by families in which the mother was a full-time homemaker as well. Almost half of the homemaker families (46.6%) used at least one regular non-maternal care arrangement, and slightly more than a third (34.2%) used at least one regular non-parental care arrangement.

5.3 Time Spent in Child Care Arrangements

Analyses were performed to estimate the number of hours children spent being cared for by caregivers other than their parents or in programs and activities they attended on a regular basis, in the week preceding the interview. These analyses, in part, reflect the proportion of homemakers and the work, educational, and voluntary activities of this particular sample of parents, as well as the extent to which work and study schedules permit spouses to share child care in two-parent families.

The results, presented in Table 6, indicate that about one-quarter of target infant and preschool children spent more than 30 hours in regular, non-parental child care arrangements.

Table 6

Hours in Regular Non-Parental Care Arrangements Last Week

Age of Child	Hours in Regular Non-Parental Care: 0	1-5	6-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41+
	(Percent)						
0 - 2	41.7	7.4	7.4	12.0	7.4	9.3	14.8
2-5	18.2	8.2	9.1	21.8	15.5	12.7	14.5
6-12	51.7	22.0	15.3	7.6	1.7	0.8	0.8

Notes: Excludes time spent in school and/or alone, and hours reflect the total time spent in all regular care arrangements.

5.4 Types of Care Arrangements Being Used

Tables 7, 8, and 9 depict the number and percentage of children in each age group being cared for in a variety of settings. These tables are based on children's experiences in the week immediately prior to the interview. Data are based on the three care arrangements that account for the largest amount of each child's time away from their mothers (or single-parent fathers).

Children who were in their mother's exclusive care are not included in these tables. Weekend arrangements were not included unless the mother was working at that time. Also not included are circumstances in which the mother regularly or occasionally cared for the child while working (distinguishable from workplace centre care). Seven mothers in this sample worked at home; five were day care providers to other children.

We also have not listed supervised/licensed/registered family home day care as a separate type of care since so few families had any contact with such arrangements. In the total sample, three children were being cared for by a relative who was licensed/registered and seven children were being cared for by a licensed/registered provider who was unrelated to them.

Table 7

Types of Non-Maternal Care Used Regularly and Irregularly for Children Younger Than Two Years of Age

Type of Care		Used Regularly[a]		Used Irregularly	
		n	%	n	%
Spouse		35	32.4	15	13.9
Sibling		1	0.9	3	2.8
Relative	- Own home	8	7.4	8	7.4
	- Other home	9	8.3	9	8.3
Non-relative	- Own home	24	22.2	12	11.1
	- Other home	22	20.4	7	6.5
Day Care Centre[b]		15	13.9	2	1.8
Recreational Program		2	1.8	1	0.9
Child Alone		1	0.9	0	0.0

n = 108

Notes: a Column totals exceed 100% since some children participate in more than one arrangement.

b Includes workplace day care.

Table 8

Types of Non-Maternal Care Used Regularly and Irregularly for Preschool Children

Type of Care	Used Regularly[a]		Used Irregularly	
	n	%	n	%
Spouse	26	23.6	7	6.4
Sibling	0	0.0	0	0.0
Relative - Own home	11	10.0	3	2.7
- Other home	11	10.0	5	4.5
Non-relative - Own home	24	21.8	4	3.6
- Other home	15	13.6	3	2.7
Nursery School	41	37.2	0	0.0
Kindergarten[b]	14	12.7	0	0.0
Day Care Centre[c]	26	23.6	0	0.0
Before- and After-School Program	3	2.7	0	0.0
Recreational Activities	10	9.1	0	0.0

n = 110

Notes: [a] Column totals exceed 100% since some families use more than one care arrangement.

[b] Offered free of charge by a local board of education.

[c] Includes workplace day care.

Table 9

Types of Non-Maternal Care Used Regularly and Irregularly for School-Aged Children

Type of Care	Used Regularly[a]		Used Irregularly	
	n	%	n	%
Spouse	32	27.1	7	5.9
Sibling	14	11.9	9	7.6
Relative - Own home	4	3.4	7	5.9
- Other home	7	5.9	4	3.4
Non-relative - Own home	11	9.3	5	4.2
- Other home	10	8.5	2	1.7
School	117	99.1	0	0.0
Before-/After-School Program	18	15.3	1	0.8
Recreational Program/ Organized Activities	16	13.6	0	0.0
Child Alone	2	1.7	4	3.4

n = 118

Notes: [a] Column totals exceed 100% since some families use more than one care arrangement.

A cursory examination of these tables reveals some interesting trends. Fathers were involved regularly as caregivers for a quarter to a third of children in each age group, amounting to 36% of the two-parent families in this sample. They provided care on an irregular basis more often to infants than to preschoolers or school-aged children.

Relatives (excluding siblings) were somewhat more likely to be regular caregivers when the child was a preschooler, and provided care on an irregular basis about twice as often for infants as for older children. Non-relatives were used by a significant number of families in all three age groups, but especially for infants and preschoolers. In-home care by a non-relative was used regularly by more than 22% of families with a child younger than six years.

Group programs (other than recreational activities) were used almost exclusively on a regular basis. (It was noted previously that few drop-in centres were available to sample families in the selected sites.) Before- and after-school programs, utilized regularly by 15% of families with a school-aged child, were also in short supply.

5.5 Main Types of Care Arrangements

Although it is clear that many families use and depend on a combination of care arrangements, most studies focus on one main type for each family. The main type of care was defined in this study as that type of non-maternal care accounting for the largest number of weekday or working hours.

Analyses were performed which enabled examination of the main type of non-maternal care being used for each age group of children, separated according to mother's work status. These analyses are presented in Table 10 for children under 6 years old and in Table 11 for school-aged children.

Table 10

Main Type of Non-Maternal Care Used for Infants and Preschoolers, by Mother's Work Status

	Selected Main Types of Care				
	Spouse	Relative	Non-Relative	Day Care Centre[a]	Nursery School or Kindergarten
			Percentage		
Full-Time Workers[b]					
Infants	19.0	19.0	35.7	26.2	0.0
Preschoolers	11.8	7.8	27.4	31.4	21.6
Children under 6	15.1	12.9	31.2	29.0	11.8
Part-Time Workers[c]					
Infants	31.0	10.3	48.4	10.3	0.0
Preschoolers	13.6	4.5	31.8	9.1	40.9
Children under 6	23.5	7.8	41.2	9.8	17.6
Homemakers[d]					
Infants	52.4	23.8	19.0	4.8	0.0
Preschoolers	12.5	8.3	20.8	20.8	37.5
Children under 6	31.1	15.5	20.0	13.3	20.0

Notes: Based on 189 families (86.7% of the infant and preschool sample) utilizing some form of regular non-maternal care.

[a] Includes workplace day care centres

[b] Full-time worker or equivalent (n=93)

[c] Part-time worker or equivalent (n=51)

[d] Includes respondents presently looking for work (n=45)

A. Infants and Preschoolers

Fathers

The father was identified as the main caregiver for children under 6 in 15% of the cases in which mothers worked full-time, and 23% of cases in which the mother was working part-time. In order for a father to be the main caregiver under these circumstances, he must be a) available at the times his wife works and b) willing to commit himself to that role.

Spouses were available in two-parent families under one of the following circumstances or a combination of them:

1. Fathers' and mothers' work/study hours did not coincide to a significant degree.

   In these cases, parents often deliberately scheduled their work and/or school activities so that one parent could be home when the other was working. In most circumstances one parent worked days or an early shift, while the other worked evenings or a later shift. Families who opted for this approach generally had strong feelings about their roles as "full-time parents." Some, however, adopted this approach primarily because they could not find and/or afford a caregiver or arrangement that met their standards.

2. The father worked at home.

   Almost exclusively, instances of fathers working at or near home were confined to farmers in this sample. In such cases fathers were available to care for a child while mother was at work or school during the day. These circumstances were more common when mothers worked or attended school part-time, and were most propitious during less demanding times of the year (from the standpoint of farm work).

3. The father was unemployed.

   Although theoretically an unemployed father could be the main caregiver when his wife is working, only one of the four fathers in this circumstance actually did so. An unemployed father who is actively job-hunting or is home due to an illness is not likely to be a main caregiver for any consistent period of time.

Relatives

Relatives were main caregivers less frequently than had initially been anticipated, perhaps reflecting the fact that most of the urban sites selected for this study were among the largest in Canada. It is possible that a representative sample of the population which includes smaller cities and towns would yield different results. Nonetheless, the overall proportion of families using relatives as main caregivers was about the same in urban and rural strata. Relatives were more likely to be main caregivers when the mother was a full-time homemaker. In these cases, relatives were main caregivers for fewer hours per week than would be expected in families in which mothers work full- or part-time.

Non-Relatives

As Table 10 indicates, care by a non-relative is the most common main type of non-parental care used for infants when mothers are employed or attending school either on a full- or part-time basis. It is also a common method of care for preschoolers.

Non-relatives are also used as a main method of care by families in which mothers are home full-time, but usually for relatively few hours during the week. Non-relatives include neighbours, paid sitters who were strangers at the time the care arrangement began, and local teenagers who are available in the evenings. Three of the wealthiest families in our sample employed full-time "nannies" who were trained in child care and were referred through an agency which places nannies, usually from other countries.

Group Care

Group care (care provided in a day care centre, nursery school, or kindergarten) was the most common main type of non-maternal care used for preschool children in all three subgroups in this sample. Day care centres were used most often when the mother was working or attending school on a full-time basis. Nursery schools and kindergartens were used more frequently by part-time workers/students and were also utilized by a significant proportion of homemakers with preschool-aged children. Workplace centre care was utilized by seven families (five with an infant, two with a preschool child). In six of these seven families, the mother was employed full-time.

B. School-Aged Children

Table 11 depicts the main type of non-maternal care (other than school) used for school-aged children in this sample, separately by mother's work/student status.

Table 11

Main Type of Non-Maternal Care Used for School-Aged Children, by Mother's Work Status

Type of Care[a]	Full-time Workers [b]	Part-time Workers [c]	Homemakers[d]
		Percent	
Spouse	17.0	45.0	45.0
Relative	17.0	10.0	15.0
Non-Relative	17.0	10.0	10.0
Before- and After-School Program	22.6	10.0	10.0
Recreational/Organized Activities	3.8	5.0	5.0
Sibling	20.8	15.0	15.0
Alone	1.9	5.0	0.0

Notes:

[a] Based on n = 93 families (78.8%) using some form of non-maternal care.

[b] Full-time or equivalent (n = 53)

[c] Part-time or equivalent (n = 20)

[d] Includes those looking for work (n = 20)

Readers should bear in mind that the main method of care for school-aged children of working mothers generally involves fewer hours than main methods employed for infants and preschoolers, and is, by definition, most likely to occur after school or in the evening. For these reasons, fathers are more likely to be the main caregiver on a percentage basis for school-aged children.

Adult Caregivers

Table 11 reveals that the use of all types of non-parental, adult-supervised care (other than recreational programs and organized activities) is highest in families where the mother is employed or attending school on a full- time basis. Use patterns were almost identical among families in which mothers were homemakers and those in which mothers were employed/attending school part-time.

Group Programs

Before- and after-school programs were utilized by almost a quarter of the families with full-time working mothers, a finding that was higher than anticipated, given the relative lack of such programs nation-wide.

Latch-Key and Sibling Care

Although latch-key arrangements are generally recognized as very common, little research has been done to determine their actual incidence. One of the obvious factors that must be recognized is that, even if common, it is not socially acceptable, especially for younger children. Hence, surveys such as this are likely to yield underestimates of its actual incidence.

Only one family indicated that their school-aged child spent the majority of after-school time alone. Care by an older sibling, however, was identified as a main method of non-maternal care by 16 families (11 of whom included full-time working mothers). Thirty-one families had indicated that their child spent some time alone or under the supervision of an older sibling in the week before the study. Twenty-seven of those cases involved school-aged children. Four, however, were infants whose mothers attended to farm chores while the baby had his/her nap. On a percentage basis, latch-key/sibling care was used sometime in the week before the interview for:

- 10.0% of families in which mothers worked full-time,
- 7.5% of families in which mothers worked part-time, and
- 10.0% of families in which mothers were home full-time.

Such arrangements were almost three times more common among single-parent families than among two-parent families.

5.6 Regular Combination Arrangements

A combination of two regular non-maternal care arrangements (excluding school programs) was observed among eight families with an infant, 20 families with a preschooler, and one family with a school-aged child. Regular combination arrangements have generally been ignored in the research literature. While many work well, the use of a combination of care methods and caregivers can create additional problems when transportation, logistics, and the possibility of part of the combination failing complicates matters. Almost 25% of parents who were using a regular combination approach at the time of the interview reported experiencing problems of various sorts. Among their concerns were their child's adjustment, transportation difficulties, and reliability. Twenty-one percent of combination users said they were concerned about a part of their combination changing or breaking down.

Combination arrangements were particularly evident among three groups: families who had a spouse or relative available part of the time, families whose five-year-olds attend part-day kindergarten, and families in which the mother's work hours extend into the evening. Often the combinations involving a spouse and sitter, spouse and relative, or relative and sitter worked fairly well. Many had a fluid quality that could absorb minor changes in scheduling and circumstances. Parents handled combinations involving kindergarten in a number of ways. Several parents employ caregivers who drive their children to or from kindergarten; others spend their lunch hour doing so, themselves. One family has a cab company pick up their child on a regular basis and drive him to Grandma's. Another mother spoke with some concern. Her 5-year-old attends a day care centre after kindergarten which both the mother and child really like; however, her daughter walks to the centre herself, a 5-block walk which involves crossing several intersections.

Single parents who have young children and who work "extended" hours seemed particularly unhappy and concerned about the lack of flexibility in day care centre hours. Their alternatives, given little flexibility in their work situations, are: a) to not use centre care at all, or b) to use a combination, which may be more costly and subject to breakdown. One parent who works until 6:00 p.m. showed the interviewer a written notice she had received in the last week from her day care centre informing her of a new policy. The centre will close at 5:30 p.m. sharp, and police will be called at that time to pick up any children who are left. At the time of the interview she was actively looking for a sitter.

5.7 Other Factors Affecting Child Care Use Patterns

Unfortunately, the available sample size does not permit reliable regional or site breakdowns of use patterns. Given the differences that exist between provinces and even within provinces, in programs, subsidy arrangements, and other funding mechanisms, such differences are likely.

Some differences between urban and rural sites were obvious, nonetheless. Specifically, care patterns for children under 6 were most likely to diverge in expected ways. Day care centres were utilized by 23% of urban families using some type of regular non-maternal care, compared to less than 15% of their rural counterparts. All families using workplace day care centres lived in urban areas. Enrollment in nursery schools and kindergartens was also more common in urban areas (16.8% v. 12.2%). Care by relatives as a main type of non-maternal care was not as different across urban and rural sites as expected (13.6% urban compared to 14.9% rural). Although interesting, these differences remain to be validated using a larger sample size that can permit regional and urban-rural breakdowns across employment and age groups.

Other variables that should be considered include the number and ages of other children in the home. The interviews suggest that care provided by a non-relative in the child's home is much more likely if there are two children needing care and one is an infant or young preschooler.

An interesting follow-up study could investigate the effects on child care use patterns of introducing publicly-sponsored kindergarten and junior kindergarten programs, and before- and after school-programs. One colleague has suggested that the introduction of junior kindergarten in her area led directly to the closing of a number of day care centres (and, we would surmise, a larger number of regular combination arrangements).

5.8 Cost of Current Arrangements

Certainly, one of the important facts parents consider and are concerned about is the cost of child care. Costs vary according to several factors, including the type of care, the age of the child, the number of hours of care being provided, and whether other children or other duties are included. Group care (and supervised family home day care) may be privately-run, publicly-funded, or sponsored by a non-profit group or agency. The cost to parents of such arrangements may be subsidized in whole or in part. Some provinces (i.e., Manitoba) have set maximum fee rates; others have not.

5.8.1 Average Costs

Because of all these factors, average costs across all types of care are fairly meaningless, since all types of care (including unpaid care by a relative or neighbour) is included in the average. Nonetheless, economists may be interested in noting some general facts.

5.8.2 Average Weekly Costs for Target Children

The average weekly costs were calculated for target children based only on their main type of regular care. Average costs (including unpaid care by a spouse and/or relative) by age group and work/student status of the mother were as follows:

Infants

Full-time	$44.17
Part-time	$24.45
Homemaker	$ 4.00

Preschoolers

Full-time	$43.39
Part-time	$17.08
Homemaker	$12.46

School-Aged Children

Full-time	$12.36
Part-time	$ 6.53
Homemaker	$ 7.19

5.8.3 Weekly Costs of All Child Care

Since some families had other children at home who required care, as well as the target child, parents were asked to indicate the total amount they had spent on child care last week. Their answers ranged from $0.0 to $300.00. General ranges across all types of non-parental care were as follows:

Cost	Percent of Sample
No costs	56.3
$ 1 - 25	16.7
$ 26 - 49	10.7
$ 50 - 74	6.8
$ 75 - 99	3.6
$100 - 150	3.9
$150+	2.1

5.8.4 Weekly Costs of Different Types of Care

Costs for each main type of non-parental care used last week for the target child are presented in Table 12.

Table 12

Costs of Main Types of Non-Parental Care Used Last Week

Type of Care	n	No Costs	$1-10	$11-29	$30-49	$50-79	$80-99	$100+
				(Percent)				
Sibling	8	62.5	37.5	-	-	-	-	-
Relative	25	44.0	4.0	28.0	12.0	8.0	4.0	-
Non-Relative								
- Own Home	44	6.8	25.0	25.0	9.1	15.9	6.8	11.4
- Other Home	38	10.5	13.2	28.9	26.3	21.1	-	-
Day Care Centre	37	10.8	8.1	29.7	16.2	24.3	2.7	8.1
Nursery School	17	5.9	29.4	52.9	-	5.9	5.9	-
After-School Program	11	9.1	36.4	45.5	-	9.1	-	-
Organized Activities	3	33.3	-	-	66.7	-	-	-
All Types	183	16.4	17.5	29.5	13.7	15.3	3.3	4.4

To be accurate, these costs should be pro-rated by the number of hours of care in order to estimate average hourly wage rates. Because of the small sample size, and resource and time constraints, these calculations were not made. Table 12 does yield some information that average hourly wage rates would mask, however. One of the points to be drawn, for example, is the lack of homogeneity in costs of some types of care. Care by a non-relative in the child's home and care in a day care centre were the most heterogeneous methods in terms of costs. Care by a non-relative in another's home was varied as well, but across a more restricted range.

5.8.5 Is Centre Care a Service Used Only by Upper and Lower Income Groups?

This question can be addressed in two ways. The most direct method is to examine the reported total gross family income of all centre users to determine their actual distribution. An alternative method is to examine the costs of centre care reported by sample participants and to estimate, based on those costs, the probable resources and income levels of centre users.

5.8.6 Families Using Centre Care

One way to approach this question is to examine the total gross family income of users of centre arrangements. Unfortunately, the small number of centre users and the lack of data on family income for some families limits the usefulness of this approach. The data available are as follows:

Family Income	n	Percent	Adjusted Percent
$ 0 - 8,999	1	2.6	4.3
$ 9,000 - 14,999	1	2.6	4.3
$15,000 - 19,999	2	5.3	8.7
$20,000 - 24,999	1	2.6	4.3
$25,000 - 29,999	4	10.5	17.4
$30,000 - 39,999	6	15.8	26.1
$40,000 - 49,999	3	7.9	13.0
$50,000 - 59,999	1	2.6	4.3
$60,000+	4	10.5	17.4
Missing	15	39.5	
	38		

Because of the missing data and the possible bias it introduces, a better means of addressing the question of access to centre spaces by middle-income families is that based on reported expenditures.

5.8.7 The Costs of Centre Care

Table 12 information indicates that the cost of centre care varies from $0.0 to over $100/week. If one were to arbitrarily set the maximum amount likely to be paid by low-income parents on full or partial subsidies at $30/week (an average of $6/day), the percentage of day care centre users in this sample who would fall within that group would be 48.6%. Families paying more than $60/week or $240/month (full fees) would comprise another 35.1%, leaving 16.2% of centre users in this sample who pay $30-50/week ($120-200/month). No parents in this sample paid $51-$59 for centre care. Other criteria would yield different results, of course. (And imposed maximums on the amounts centres can charge in certain provinces would have to be considered as well.) Nonetheless, these rough and arbitrary divisions do suggest that a minority of day care centre spaces would be likely to be held by middle-income Canadians. Such speculations must remain just that, however, given the small number of centre users in this sample. A larger study would provide more definitive information.

CHAPTER 6.0 PARENTS' REASONS FOR USING THEIR CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

As indicated in Chapter 5, child care use patterns reflect many things. Parents' needs and preferences are filtered through multiple "screens" - including the relative availability, affordability, and perceived quality of alternatives that might be considered. Lero (1981) has developed a preliminary model of the factors and processes involved when parents select a care arrangement. In that study, one of the major findings was that parents' attitudes and evaluative criteria were significant correlates/predictors of preferences among arrangement types and actual use patterns. This chapter presents data on 1) evaluative criteria (the factors parents have in mind when searching for, and deciding among child care arrangements); 2) parents' stated reasons for not considering or not using particular types of arrangements; and 3) parents' stated reasons for using the particular centre or caregiver they employed on a regular basis at the time of the study.

6.1 Ratings of Selected Evaluative Criteria

Several methods can be used to investigate parents' evaluative criteria when selecting a child care arrangement, and the relative importance they attach to them. Because parents usually consider and weigh a fairly large number of factors, open-ended discussions and probing can be fairly time-consuming, especially when parents are asked to consciously reflect on processes and relative rankings that they may not have thought about before, or at least for some time. Also, it is not socially desirable for parents to tell researchers in an interview situation that cost and convenience are or were very important criteria, although they are likely to be. For these reasons, a list of possible criteria (excluding cost) was presented to respondents with the following instructions:

> "People look for many different things when they are trying to find a child care arrangement that is best suited to their needs, their children, and their personal values. If your current arrangement fell through or if you had to go to work and needed to make (new) arrangements for your child, how important would each of the factors on this list be to you?"

Participants were asked to circle the number that best matched their view for each factor. Choices were:

1 = Not important;
2 = Not too important, but does matter;
3 = Important, but not critical; or
4 = Very important, essential.

Results for the sample as a whole are presented in Table 13.

Table 13

Parents' Views of the Importance of Specific Evaluative Criteria When Selecting a Child Care Arrangement

Criterion	Mean Rating
1. The caregiver/arrangement would be reliable and available every day.	3.8
2. The amount of affection and attention shown your child would be similar to that shown at home.	3.7
3. The way in which the caregiver would discipline your child would be similar to the way you discipline him/her at home.	3.6
4. The child care arrangement would have good outdoor play space.	3.6
5. The caregiver would encourage your child's curiosity and creativity.	3.6
6. Hot, well-prepared nutritious meals (or snacks for older children) would be provided.	3.5
7. The caregiver or centre would be flexible in order to accommodate changes in your schedule or needs.	3.4
8. Other children your child's age would be available for your child to play with.	3.4
9. The caregiver or centre would be located in your immediate neighbourhood.	3.2
10. The child care arrangement would offer things to do which would help him/her develop better coordination.	3.2
11. The caregiver or centre would offer your child a great deal of individual attention.	3.2
12. The caregiver or centre would help your child learn to speak better.	3.1
13. The caregiver or centre could care for your child even if your child is sick.	3.1
14. The child care arrangement would offer experiences that are new or different from those at home.	3.0
15. The child care arrangement would have a regular routine which is the same every day.	2.9
16. The caregiver or centre would help prepare your child for school by teaching numbers, letters, etc.	2.9
17. The caregiver had a university or college degree in early childhood education or child care.	2.3

Parents' Views of the Importance of Specific Evaluative Criteria When Selecting a Child Care Arrangement

Criterion	Mean Rating
18. The income level of the person caring for your child would be similar to your own.	1.7
IF SELECTING A DAY CARE CENTRE/PRESCHOOL OR BEFORE- OR AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM:	
1. The centre would be licensed by the provincial government.	3.4
2. As a parent, you would have strong input into decisions made about the program, staff, and other issues that are important to you.	3.3
IF SELECTING AN INDIVIDUAL CAREGIVER (A NEIGHBOUR OR SOMEONE YOU PAID TO CARE FOR YOUR CHILD):	
1. The caregiver would be someone you and your child have known for a while.	3.3
2. The caregiver would provide receipts for child care payments.	2.7
3. The caregiver would be licensed or registered with the province or a local day care agency.	2.3

Criteria were rated as follows:

1 = Not important;
2 = Not too important, but does matter;
3 = Important, but not critical; or
4 = Very important, essential.

The first obvious point to be noted from Table 13 is that parents indicated that many of the factors that were listed were important to them. Among the first (general) grouping of 18 criteria, almost half were rated as being very important to parents (averaging 3.3 or more, out of 4). It was interesting to find that the relative weights given to specific evaluative criteria were almost identical to the pattern that emerged in Lero's earlier study of families in one moderate-sized city in southern Ontario.

Clearly, caregiver/program reliability is essential to working parents. Other factors that relate to parents' needs, time, and convenience are item 7 (flexibility to meet changes in schedules), item 9 (a convenient location), and item 13 (care for sick children). These items had moderately high ratings - 3.4, 3.2, and 3.1, respectively.

The extent to which children will be given individual attention in a way that is consistent with parents' values is another primary concern (see items, 2, 3, and 11). Items 2 and 3 (ranked very highly) have been shown to be particularly important to parents who utilize in-home and family day care home arrangements. Item 11 expresses a similar concern applied to group settings.

Two features of the physical environment which are frequently included in regulatory standards are items 4 (outdoor play space) and 6 (good nutrition). Both were rated very highly. Item 8 (opportunities for children to play with peers) is also a very important criterion to parents - especially for children older than three or four years.

The remainder of the general set of criteria includes a number of characteristics that are related to the amount and kinds of stimulation and activities offered in the care setting. Other than item 5 (encouraging a child's curiosity and creativity), which was given a mean rating of 3.6, the others varied in the range of 2.9 - 3.2 (important, but not critical). Other studies have suggested that parents who select group care arrangements for their preschool children are likely to attach greater weight to these criteria than parents who select home-based care.

Only two dimensions were considered to be somewhat unimportant by the group as a whole. These dimensions were the formal training caregivers had in early childhood education or child care, and perceived similarity in income level between a potential caregiver and the respondent. While social desirability may account for low ratings on the latter dimension, it seems clear that parents consider the actual nature of care provided to be more important than particular characteristics of the caregiver, which parents see as less directly tied to observable dimensions of care. The fact that parents perceived formal training in early childhood education to be less important or less directly tied to the nature of care provided is noteworthy, since respondents rated the extent to which the caregiver/arrangement encouraged or stimulated a child's curiosity and creativity, motor coordination, language, and cognitive development as quite important to them. Whether this discrepancy indicates a lack of appreciation of the content of formal training in early childhood education, a healthy skepticism about the value of a diploma or degree compared to individual differences, or some defensiveness, especially on the part of users of informal arrangements, is open to question.

Two additional subsets of items were included in the list of possible evaluative criteria - two items specifically related to group care and three items which were specific to family home day care and/or informal, in-home care arrangements. The ratings for the two centre-based items indicate that parents do attach importance to a centre being licensed by the provincial government and, in general, would prefer to be involved in decisions related to the program, the staff, and other issues.

When parents were asked to consider their criteria for selecting a neighbour or paid sitter, they indicated that they do feel it is important, although not critical, that their caregiver be someone they have known for some time. Parents rated as less important to them both the criterion that the caregiver would provide receipts (which is required in order to claim the federal child care tax deduction), and the criterion that the caregiver be licensed or registered with the province or a local day care agency (rated 2.7 and 2.3, respectively). Since most families have had little experience with licensed/registered/supervised home care providers, this finding is not too surprising. However, given that current research indicates that caregiver training and/or affiliation with a day care or social agency is an important correlate of the quality of care provided in family day care homes (Lero and Kyle, 1985), we might anticipate that the importance parents attribute to this factor will change with enhanced access to, and experience with supervised family home day care providers.

In summary, parents' ratings of evaluative criteria indicate that they consider many factors to be important to them, and verify the fact that selecting a child care arrangement is a complex decision-making task that includes juxtaposing a variety of elements that will affect both parents and their children. The relative weight given to these criteria and others is further elucidated by analyzing what parents said were the specific reasons for not considering or not using alternatives to their current arrangements, and which features were important in their decision to use a particular caregiver or program in their community.

6.2 Parents' Reasons for Not Considering Other Child Care Arrangements

Parents using some type of non-maternal care at the time of the interview were asked whether they had seriously considered any other arrangements for the target child at the time they began to use their current method(s). One hundred and eight respondents (40.5% of those using some type of non-maternal care) answered "yes"; the remainder had not seriously considered other alternatives. Among those who considered other alternatives were 66 families who considered one other type of care, 30 who considered two alternative methods, and 12 families who considered three or more alternative methods to the one they were using at the time of the study. Families with an infant or preschool child were 1.5 times more likely to have considered alternative arrangements to their current method(s), and were also more likely to have considered more than one other alternative.

The reasons parents gave for not considering various alternatives spanned a variety that included cost, convenience factors, quality factors, and those related to their children's needs either for an opportunity to interact with peers or to receive individual attention in a home environment. One other reason frequently given for not considering other alternatives was that parents had access to a method or combination that they preferred to use or one that met their needs conveniently and/or at lower cost. Parents' reasons for not considering specific alternatives were as follows.

6.2.1 Care by a Relative

The primary reason given for not considering care by a relative was that no relative was available. This reason was given by 76% of those using some type of care who did not consider relative care. Eight parents mentioned that they didn't want to impose on a relative; the remainder either had access to a more preferred arrangement or gave one of the other reasons, none of which was given by more than three families.

6.2.2. Care by a Non-Relative in the Child's Home

One hundred and forty-three families had not considered care by a non-relative (a neighbour, friend, or paid sitter) in the family home. Two primary reasons were given. Twenty-eight respondents said that this type of care was too expensive for them. An equal number could not find a reliable caregiver who would care for their child (or children) in their home. Fifteen parents (11 of whom had a preschool child) preferred an arrangement in which their child would have social contacts with peers. Eight parents specifically mentioned that such an arrangement would not offer their child the kind of stimulation or supervision they would want. The remainder gave other reasons, including access to a more desirable type of care.

6.2.3. Care by a Licensed or Registered Family Day Care Provider

The most common reason for not considering this type of care arrangement was that licensed/registered providers were not available or the parent didn't know of any. Many parents in this study were not familiar with the concept of family home day care as a program in which caregivers are licensed and/or affiliated with an agency. Sixteen parents (mostly with infants) thought their child was too young for this type of care (although in many provinces family home day care is thought to be a reasonable alternative for infants as well as for preschool and school-aged children.) Eighteen parents had concerns about the quality of care (stimulation) provided; other reasons mentioned were that this type of care was too expensive (n = 14) or inconvenient (n = 8). Six parents who investigated family home day care reported that they didn't like the caregiver or the home that they had seen. The remainder of those who didn't consider family home day care preferred other alternatives (a relative or neighbour they knew, or a group program they were familiar with or had investigated); still others thought an older sibling could manage until one or both parents came home.

6.2.4. Care by an Unlicensed Sitter (in the Sitter's Home)

Data presented in Chapter 5 indicated that care by a non-relative (a neighbour, friend or sitter) is one of the most common types of non-parental care used by parents of all age groups. One hundred and forty-eight families in this sample who were not using care by a sitter had not considered this alternative. The reasons given were as follows:

- 22 parents thought this method inconvenient,
- 16 parents expressed concern about the quality of sitter care,
- 15 could not find a reliable or available caregiver who met their standards,
- 13 thought this type of care too expensive for them, and
- 8 wanted their child to be with peers.

The remainder preferred an alternative method.

6.2.5. Day Care Centres

Ninety-nine families with either an infant or a preschooler had not considered centre care. Among their reasons were the following:

- 31 families (27 with infants) thought their child was too young for centre care,
- 11 families thought centre care was too expensive for them,
- 8 families specifically wanted care in a home environment,
- 8 parents had concerns about quality,
- 7 found centre care to be inconveniently located or unable to accommodate their needs, and
- 5 said centre care was not available to them.

Other reasons for not considering centre care as a viable option included the availability of a more preferred alternative and, in a few cases, disapproval of the concept of centre care.

6.2.6. Nursery Schools

Enrollment in a nursery school was considered by less than half of the families with a preschool child, who were not using this type of care. Nursery schools generally serve 3-5-year-old children. Fourteen parents thought their preschooler (2-5 years old in this sample) too young for this type of care; another 14 either preferred another alternative or needed a full-time arrangement. Six thought this method too costly; seven reported that nursery school was not available to them. Only one parent expressed a concern about quality.

6.2.7. Before- and After-School Programs

Families using some type of care for their school-aged child often had not considered care in an after-school program. The primary reason was lack of availability. Other reasons were idiosyncratic, with two exceptions. Parents with school-aged children ten years or older often thought their child didn't need formal care, especially if an older sibling was available. The other comment made by several parents who had used after-school programs previously or had investigated their suitability for a child nine or ten years old was that such programs were geared for a younger age group. Several 9-year-olds complained to their parents that there were no other children their age and they no longer wanted to attend.

In summary, these data indicate that parents who didn't consider various alternatives acted this way for a variety of reasons. Lack of availability was the most common reason for not considering care by a relative, care by a registered/supervised family home day care provider, and after-school programs for school-aged children, and was a prominent reason for not considering most other alternatives as well. Cost was a critical factor in parents' decisions not to consider care by a non-relative in the child's home, and played a significant role in parents not considering supervised family home day care, sitter care, centre care, and care in a nursery school. Concern about the quality of care seemed most pronounced in parents' reasons for not considering care provided by an unrelated individual caregiver.

6.3 Parents' Reasons for Not Using Arrangements They Had Considered

We also asked parents why they decided not to use those care arrangements they had considered as alternatives to their present methods. Parents' reasons for not using particular types of care were similar to the reasons other parents had given for not considering those arrangements, and centred primarily on affordability, availability, quality and convenience. In general, parents who had considered care by a spouse or relative did use those arrangements; arrangements most often considered but not used were care by a non-relative and centre care.

In this particular sample, for children under two years of age:

- only one family who considered care by a spouse didn't use spouse care as a main method,
- 7 families considered, but did not use care by a relative,
- 36 families considered, but did not use care by a non-relative, and
- 15 families considered, but did not use care in a day care centre.

For children 2-5 years of age:

- 8 families considered, but didn't use care by a relative,
- 22 considered and didn't use care by a non-relative,
- 2 opted not to use care in a nursery school setting, and
- 21 actively considered care in a day care centre and decided against it.

For families with school-aged children, 6-12:

- 2 considered but did not use care provided by a relative,
- 18 considered, but didn't use care by non-relative, and
- 5 considered, but did not use a before- and after-school program.

6.3.1 Care by a Relative

Parents' reasons for not utilizing relatives as main caregivers were similar across age groups. Three families found that the relative they considered was not available; other reasons given included not wanting to impose on the relative, inconvenience, and the lack of child peers.

6.3.2. Non-Relatives Versus Formal Care Programs

Parents' stated reasons for not using care by a non-relative, a day care centre, or a before- and after-school program are summarized in Table 14. Since parents who lack the options of having care provided by a spouse or relative often must decide between informal, unsupervised care and care in a group program, a side-by-side comparison of the reasons given for not using these two types after serious consideration of them is informative.

Table 14

Parents' Reasons for Not Using Care Provided by Non-Relatives v. Care Provided in Group Programs by Age of Target Child[a]

Reason for Not Using Arrangement	Infants		Preschoolers		School-Aged Children	
	N-R (n=36)	DCC (n=15)	N-R (n=22)	DCC (n=21)	N-R (n=18)	B&A SP (n=5)
Availability	22.2	26.6	13.6	9.5	5.6	20.0
Cost[b]	30.6	13.3	22.7	52.4	33.3	20.0
Convenience	8.3	-	13.6	28.6	22.2	20.0
Child Peers	16.7	-	18.2	4.8	-	-
Home Arrangement	-	-	-	4.8	5.6	20.0
Child Too Young	2.8	40.0	4.5	4.8	-	-
Didn't like Care-giver/Facilities	22.2	20.0	31.8	4.8	22.2	20.0
Too Little Supervision	5.6	6.7	-	4.8	11.1	-
No Trained Staff/ Too Little Supervision	13.9	-	18.2	14.3	5.6	-
Total Quality Concerns	41.7	26.7	50.0	23.9	38.9	20.0

N-R = Non-Relative
DCC = Day Care Centre
B&A SP = Before- and After-School Program

Notes:
a Columns are percentages. Column totals may exceed 100% since some parents gave more than one reason for not using a care arrangement.
b Includes both "care too expensive" and "couldn't get child care subsidy."

As Table 14 indicates, the largest number of arrangements considered but not used involved care provided by a non-relative. The ratio of those who considered but didn't use care by a friend, neighbour, or paid sitter to those who considered but didn't use care in a group program was highest among families with an infant, next highest for families with school-aged children, and just about equal for families seeking care for a preschooler.

Table 14 also indicates that while affordability, availability, and convenience are important reasons parents gave for not using both types of care, parental concerns about the quality of care provided were prominent. Concerns about the quality of caregiving interactions and the caregiver's environment accounted for the largest proportion of reasons given for not using care by a sitter or other non-relative for all three age groups.

Concern about quality was also given as a reason for not using group care by one-fifth or more of the parents who considered group arrangements for infants, preschoolers, and school-aged children. In addition, 40% of parents who considered group care for an infant said they did not use that method because their child was too young. (This statement probably reflects both parents' concerns about the appropriateness of group care for an infant, and actual restrictions on the number of centres that will accept children younger than two years of age.) The high cost of centre care was the most common reason given for not using a day care centre for preschool children by parents who had actively considered that alternative. This finding lends further support to the perception or concern that parents and others have about centre care being a service from which working- and middle-class Canadian families are effectively excluded by virtue of its costs and the funding mechanisms that tie day care to welfare services.

6.4 Parents' Reasons for Using Particular Caregivers or Programs

The first three parts of this chapter have focused on parents' evaluative criteria, and their reasons for not considering or not using various types of child care arrangements. A further point worthy of explanation is why parents select a particular caregiver or child care program over others.

6.4.1 The Particular Caregiver

One hundred and ninety-two parents who were using care provided by an individual caregiver either exclusively when mother or both parents are unavailable, or in combination with other methods, were asked, in an open-ended question, why they chose the particular caregiver they did, rather than someone else. All gave at least one reason, and two-thirds gave a second reason as well. The reasons given can be classified into a number of groupings: caregiver availability in caregiver characteristics and presumed quality of care; and location, cost and logistical considerations. Results are summarized in Table 15.

Table 15

Parents' Reasons for Using a Particular Caregiver

Reason	Number[a]	Percent[b]
Caregiver Availability		
Spouse/relative was willing	63	32.8
Friend/neighbour volunteered	7	3.6
Knew caregiver before	19	9.9
Caregiver was recommended	12	6.2
Only caregiver found	7	3.6
Caregiver Characteristics		
Caregiver experienced with children	12	6.2
Caregiver's training	3	1.6
Caregiver's personality	59	30.7
Caregiver is reliable, dependable	29	15.1
Good quality care	13	6.8
Other children present	8	4.2
Logistical Reasons		
Location, convenience	27	14.1
Cost	13	6.8
Siblings could attend	8	4.2

Notes: [a] Based on first two reasons given by 192 families.
[b] Percentage is calculated out of 192. Column total exceeds 100% because of the number of families who gave more than one reason.

As indicated in Table 15, parents articulated a number of reasons why they selected their particular caregiver. Over one-third of this group (36.5%) were fortunate enough to have a spouse, relative or friend who was willing and available and who they felt could provide good care. Another 10% had known the caregiver for some time, felt comfortable with her, and had approached her to ask if she would provide care. The remainder (over half of those families using care provided by an unrelated individual) had to search for a caregiver who could provide the kind of care they desired. Six percent of families used a caregiver who was recommended by relatives, friends, or co-workers. Others advertised in newspapers, used bulletin boards and canvassed the possibilities in other ways. Sixty-five parents told interviewers that they had experienced at least some difficulty finding an available caregiver who met their standards.

Naturally, parents considered individual caregivers' characteristics rather carefully. In keeping with other studies, parents placed considerable emphasis on the caregiver's personality, and the way she/he responds to children. Parents were looking for someone who was warm, caring, and genuinely interested in their child; someone who shared their beliefs about child-rearing, the use of discipline, etc. Many of the caregiver characteristics listed individually in Table 15 could be collapsed into a general category of "positive characteristics presumed to indicate good quality care." We present them individually to illustrate how parents conceptualized and verbalized those dimensions. Also included in this grouping is the criterion that other children be present, since some parents specifically wanted a home-like setting with a competent caregiver which would also offer their child opportunities to play with other children.

Logistical reasons included cost, a convenient location, someone who could be flexible at times when parents' schedules varied, and a caregiver who could provide care for a sibling as well. Michelson's work with the "Child in the City Project" (1983) has elucidated how logistical factors can directly affect personal and family time schedules and personal stress levels. In all likelihood, the number of families whose choice of a particular caregiver was influenced by logistical factors is seriously underestimated in Table 15, since care by a spouse, relative, or neighbour who volunteers her/his services is likely to be convenient, inexpensive and easy to use. There is also the possibility that some parents felt that such an answer would not be socially desirable in the interview situation.

6.4.2 The Particular Program

Eighty-one parents who were using care provided in a nursery school, day care centre, or before- and after-school program were asked why they chose the particular centre/program they were using. All gave one reason, 58 gave two, and 32 parents gave three reasons. Results are summarized in Table 16.

Table 16

Parents' Reasons for Using a Particular Centre or Program

Reason	Number[a]	Percent[b]
Centre/Program Availability		
Only one available	18	22.2
Centre was recommended/parents familiar with program	19	23.5
Related to church/ethnic group	2	2.5
Program Quality		
Liked program, impressed	53	65.4
Trained, caring staff	10	12.3
Activities, facilities	4	4.9
Philosophy, principles	4	4.9
Logistical Reasons		
Location, convenience[c]	41	50.6
Cost	7	8.6
Siblings could attend	4	4.9
Parent participation welcomed	3	3.7
Other	6	7.4

Notes: [a] Based on as many as three reasons given by 81 families.

[b] Percentage is calculated out of 81. Column total exceeds 100% because of the number of families who gave more than one reason.

[c] Includes flexibility of hours, and availability of a kindergarten program on site in two cases.

As expected, overall program quality and specific features indicative of good quality (trained, caring staff, good outdoor play space; a well-equipped facility; etc.) was the deciding factor among alternative programs when more than one program was available for purposes of comparison.

Almost one-quarter of those using group care of one sort or another indicated that there was only one program to choose. This statement varied by age group, and was given by 32% of families with a child under 2, 12.5% of families with a child 2-5 years old, and 21.4% of families with a school-aged child, reflecting the fact that most group care programs serve preschoolers, and that programs for infants and for school-aged children are less available.

The other major factor in parents' choice of a particular program was logistical - specifically, either a convenient location and/or flexibility of scheduling or availability at the time of parents' need. Some readers may be surprised to find that cost was not mentioned more often. There are several explanations. One is that if cost is likely to be a serious concern and the family is not eligible for a subsidy, they may already have ruled out centre care as a viable option. Once a family has decided to use a group care program, they may find that alternative programs do not vary greatly in cost. Families who qualify for a subsidy would pay about the same amount as long as they enrolled their child in a non-profit centre or one that has been approved for purchase-of-service agreements. Families who can afford to pay full fees may not find large differences in costs among the centres they would consider. Finally, if the number of programs to choose from for those who want group care is severely limited, cost is not likely to be a deciding factor.

In summary, parents base their choice of a particular type of care, and then a particular caregiver or program, on a number of variables. The factors that influence and define the specific needs families have must be juxtaposed against the availability, affordability, convenience, and perceived quality of the alternatives. Decision-making may be easy in cases where a desired arrangement is readily available. In other cases, deciding on a child care arrangement that optimizes what is best for children and for their parents, given available and affordable alternatives, can be very difficult and anxiety- provoking. In all, 33.1% of sample respondents using care reported that it had been somewhat difficult or very difficult for them to find their current child care arrangement. In the extreme case, a parent may decide to quit working.

A particular example was the rural, single mother we interviewed who had two boys, aged 11 and 13. Mrs. R.J. had been employed for a number of years at a local inn where she worked as a cocktail waitress in the evenings. When her children were younger she had utilized the local day care centre and later on, an after-school program. In the last year, however, her boys had started to hang out with others who were a bad influence, leading finally to a brush with the law. Mrs. R.J. has been unable to find the kind of care she would most prefer - a live-in "grandmother-type," and paid sitters are "too expensive" and "often unreliable." As a result, she has quit her job, is presently collecting unemployment insurance and seeking day-time work. She is not optimistic, given her limited education and job skills and the lack of job opportunities in her area, but is convinced that if she cannot find suitable care in the evenings, she will have to stay home and go on welfare.

While Mrs. R.J. is an extreme case, other parents have verbalized the considerable stress they have felt at times when trying to find quality caregivers or programs that they can afford and that can function as the family resource they need.

CHAPTER 7.0 PARENTS' PREFERENCES AMONG WORK AND CHILD CARE OPTIONS

The fourth objective of this study was to explore parents' preferences, as well as their beliefs about what services, practices, and forms of assistance would best meet their own needs and support their children's development. In meeting this objective, we addressed preferences not only from a services perspective (i.e., the need/desire for additional day care centres, licensed homes, etc.), but also from the perspective of what type of family employment pattern parents feel would be best suited to their own and their family's needs.

The findings reported in this chapter and the following one are derived not only from specific questions that were asked (i.e., quantitative data), but also from each interview taken as a whole, including the comments many parents made about child care (qualitative case analyses). It is difficult to convey the full richness of parents' comments and concerns in a report this size; a few direct quotes are included to underscore some of the concerns.

7.1 Preferences Among Employment Options

7.1.1 Two-Parent Families

Mothers were asked to respond to the following question: "If you had your choice, what type of employment would be best suited to your own needs and the needs of your family?" Parents' responses were analyzed separately for two-parent and single-parent families according to the target child's age. Results are presented in Tables 17 and 18, respectively. Before turning to detailed findings, it is appropriate to mention that the findings are specific to this particular sample, and should not be generalized to the Canadian population without further validation with a representative sample.

Table 17

Mothers' Ideal Preference among Employment Options in Two-Parent Families, by Target Child's Age[a]

Target Child	Both parents work full-time	Both parents work part-time	Father full-time, Mother part-time	Mother works at home	Mother full-time home-maker	Other[b]
	Preference (Percentage)					
Infant (n=87)	16.1	16.1	25.3	13.8	23.0	5.7
Preschooler (n=81)	33.3	4.9	29.6	13.5	17.3	1.2
School-Aged (n=80)	16.2	8.7	38.7	18.8	11.3	6.3
Total Sample (n=248)	21.8	10.1	31.0	15.3	17.3	4.4

Notes: a The presence of other children younger or older than the target child may affect preferences.

b Includes part- or full-time student.

Table 17 reveals a number of interesting findings. Perhaps the first conclusion that should be drawn is that no one pattern was preferred by a majority of families for any age group. This finding is interesting in that it points towards more diversity in parents' preferred employment options than would normally be expected or anticipated on the basis of economic projections or "traditional" family views.

Second, one can note that the family employment option mothers specified as most suitable to meet their own and their family's needs was for the father to work full-time and for the mother to be employed part-time (often corresponding to those hours when children would be in school or enrolled in a group program). The traditional pattern of mother as a full-time homemaker was preferred by a little more than one-sixth of mothers in two-parent families. Even when homemakers and those who would want to work at home are combined, the tally accounts for only about one-third of all two-parent families in this particular sample. An exclusive homemaker role was most often preferred in families in which the target child was under two years old, and least often preferred by families with an older school-aged (target) child.

A third interesting point is observed in the number and distribution of families in which mothers thought that both parents working full-time would be the most suitable/desired option. This employment pattern was considered best for meeting one's own and one's family's needs by slightly more than a fifth of the total sample. An intriguing point is the fact that this option was preferred twice as often by parents of preschoolers as by parents in families with either an infant or a school-aged (target) child. Several possibilities may explain this unexpected pattern in parents' preferred work status. One possibility is that the number and ages of other children in the family is responsible for what appears to be a pattern related to the age of the target child. A second possibility is that parents' employment preferences are related to the availability of formal full-day child care services. (Few sites offered parents much of an opportunity to utilize centre care for infants, or formal after-school programs.) A third possibility is that the finding is unique to this particular sample and its socio-demographic characteristics. Whether one or more of these explanations accounts for this unusual finding, or whether there really is a curvilinear pattern in preferences for both parents to work full-time cannot be ascertained at this time. We hope future research will address the question, however.

Finally, we note that relatively few mothers seemed to prefer a pattern that might be espoused by some as indicative of less rigid sex-role stereotyping in parents' work and child-rearing roles. About ten percent of mothers thought that both parents working part-time and sharing child care would be best suited to their own and their family's needs. This pattern was most often preferred by mothers with at least one infant (and usually only one infant) at home.

7.1.2 Single-Parent Families

Responses by single parents to the same question resulted in similar findings. Inspection of Table 18 indicates that employment preferences were heterogeneous; that a significant proportion of single parents, as well as mothers in two-parent families feel part-time employment outside the home is an attractive alternative; and that a larger proportion of parents with a preschool-aged target child would prefer to work full-time outside the home than those with an infant or school-aged target child.

Table 18

Parents' Ideal Preference Among Employment Options in Lone-Parent Families by Target Child's Age[a]

Target Child	Full-Time Employment	Part-Time Employment	Full-Time Work at Home	Full-Time Homemaker	Other[b]
		Preference (Percentage)			
Infant (n=18)	16.7	38.9	11.1	33.3	
Preschooler (n=25)	40.0	28.0	16.0	12.0	4.0
School-Aged (n=35)	28.6	37.1	22.9	-	5.7
Total Sample (n=78)	29.5	34.6	17.9	14.1	3.8

Notes: a The presence of other children younger or older than the target child may affect preferences.

b Includes part- or full-time students.

7.2 The Match Between Current Work Status and Preferred Work Status

An interesting point is the comparison between parents' actual employment status and their employment preferences. A comparison based on information from all two-parent families other than those from Québec resulted in the following data:

Percentage of Families in Which Current Employment Status Equals Preferred Employment Status[a]

Current Employment Status		
Both parents work full-time	(n = 71)	38.0%
Both parents work part-time	(n = 7)	14.3%
Father full-time, mother part-time	(n = 65)	43.1%
Father full-time, mother at home[b]	(n = 32)	71.9%

Notes: a Information on spouse's employment status is unavailable for Québec families because of a discrepancy that arose in translation.

b Includes mothers working full- or part-time at home.

A similar juxtaposition for single parents is as follows:

Percentage of Single Parents Whose Current Employment Status Equals Preferred Work Status

Current Employment Status		
Employed full-time	(n = 31)	32.3%
Employed part-time	(n = 25)	32.0%
Homemaker	(n = 6)	66.7%

Includes parents who prefer to work at home

These results suggest that many families are engaged in an employment pattern other than the one they feel is best suited to their own and their family's needs. Parents who would prefer to work part-time (and particularly couples who might want to each have a part-time job and share child care) were least likely to be engaged in their preferred pattern. Mothers who felt that being a full-time homemaker was the best option for them were most likely to be engaged in that pattern.

7.3 Factors That Inhibit Parents' Use of Preferred Employment Patterns

When mothers were asked what, if anything, prevented them from being engaged in the employment/homemaker pattern that they feel would be optimal for themselves and their families, they cited a number of different factors. Those cited most often by parents who would have preferred to work part- time rather than full-time, or be homemakers rather than work outside the home were (in descending order):

Cannot afford to lose income	(n = 70)
Employer would not permit part-time work (school-hours only or preferred schedule)	(n = 30)
It would interfere with career progress; would lose seniority	(n = 28)
Cannot afford to lose benefits	(n = 10)
Parents who might have preferred to work part- or full-time at home and did not do so, most often indicated either that the work they did could not be done at home; or	(n=26)
That they had no job skills that would enable them to work at home	(n=9).

Finally, 18 mothers indicated that they could not either work outside the home at this time or increase the number of hours they worked from part-time to full-time because they cannot find or cannot afford good child care.

These results are intriguing to those interested in family policy and should be replicated with a larger, representative sample of Canadians.

7.4 Parents' Preferences among Child Care Arrangements

There are a number of different procedures that may be used to assess parents' preferences among child care options. The wording of preference questions, and even the point at which they appear in the interview can affect parents' responses. For example, parents might infer that they are being asked about their "ideal" preference, regardless of cost, practical issues, etc. Alternatively, parents may assume that their response must be one from among the services presently available in their community or neighbourhood, when that context was not meant to apply. A further complication in the present study was how to meaningfully integrate parents' responses about preferred employment/homemaker roles and child care preferences, since a mother who clearly preferred to be home with her children or to share work and child care with her spouse conveyed to us that her first preference for child care would be that she (and her spouse) care for the children at home.

The methodology we adopted was consistent with the idea that the interviews were case studies containing qualitative as well as quantitative data. The principal investigator read through each interview, paying particular attention to the following aspects: stated preference for workplace day care; parents' reasons for not considering (and not using) child care methods other than their present arrangements; parents' reasons for using a particular caregiver or program; parents' responses when asked whether they would want to change their child care arrangement; responses to the question about preferred employment/homemaker status; and spontaneous comments recorded or summarized at the end of the interview. In most cases, it was not difficult to ascertain what the preferred type of care was. A second reader was consulted on all interviews where there was some doubt, and for a random selection of one-tenth of the remaining interviews. Only one preferred type of care was recorded for each family. In all likelihood, the method we adopted is a compromise between ideal preferences and those dictated or constrained by context. Mothers who clearly stated that they would rather not work at this time (or would rather work at home) were recorded as most preferring that care be provided by them at home. Parents who said they would "definitely" use a workplace day care centre if it were available were recorded as most preferring care in a day care centre. Other parents' preferences were more context-bound, in that the reasons they gave for not considering/not using alternative methods and, in particular, for any change they desired to make in their present arrangement, were given more weight.

Tables 19, 20, and 21 present parents' child care preferences, broken down by mother's current employment status and urban-rural location of the family. Table 19 relates to child care preferences for infants, Table 20 focuses on preschool children aged 2-5, and Table 21 pertains to school-aged children of 6-12 years old. Inspection of these tables indicates that there are some significant differences in parents' preferred child care options according to current employment and urban-rural location. While some differences are more subtle than others, several general conclusions do emerge.

7.4.1 Centre Care

There is considerable demand/preference for "formal" child services - day care centres (including workplace day care), nursery schools, and before- and after-school programs - especially among urban families in which mothers currently are employed either full- or part-time. Formal services are also preferred by mothers of infants and school-aged children in rural areas who work full-time.

Table 19

Preferred Main Type of Child Care Arrangement for Children Under Two, by Respondent's Current Work Status and Urban-Rural Residence

Preferred Main Type of Child Care	Urban	Rural	Combined
		Percent	
Employed Full-Time			
Parent(s)	3.7	21.4	9.8
Relative	11.1	21.4	14.6
In Home Non-Relative	22.2	7.1	17.1
Other Home Non-Relative	18.5	7.1	14.6
Day Care Centre[1]	40.7	42.9	41.5
Other	3.7	-	2.4
Employed Part-Time			
Parent(s)	18.8	46.7	32.3
Relative	6.3	6.7	6.5
In Home Non-Relative	31.3	13.3	22.6
Other Home Non-Relative	-	20.0	9.7
Nursery School	6.3	-	3.2
Day Care Centre	31.3	13.3	22.6
Other	6.3	-	3.2
Home-Maker; Not Working[2]			
Parent(s)	64.7	81.8	71.4
Relative	-	-	-
In Home Non-Relative	11.8	-	7.1
Day Care Centre	17.6	18.2	17.9
Other	5.9	-	3.6

Notes: 1 Includes workplace day care
2 Includes respondents who are looking for employment.

Data is missing for eight families.

Table 20

Preferred Main Type of Child Care Arrangement for Preschool Children, by Respondent's Current Work Status and Urban-Rural Residence

Preferred Main Type of Child Care	Urban	Rural	Combined
		Percent	
Employed Full-Time			
Parent(s)	17.6	36.8	24.5
Relative	8.8	5.3	7.5
In Home Non-Relative	8.8	26.3	15.1
Other Home Non-Relative	5.9	15.8	9.4
Nursery School	5.9	-	3.8
Day Care Centre[1]	41.2	15.8	32.1
After-School Program	5.9	-	3.8
Other	5.9	-	3.8
Employed Part-Time			
Parent(s)	11.1	33.3	25.0
Relative	11.1	6.7	8.3
In Home Non-Relative	11.1	6.7	8.3
Other Home Non-Relative	22.2	13.3	16.7
Nursery School	11.1	6.7	8.3
Day Care Centre	33.3	33.3	33.3
Home-Maker; Not Working[2]			
Parent(s)	33.3	33.3	33.3
Relative	11.1	11.1	11.1
In Home Non-Relative	-	11.1	3.7
Other Home Non-Relative	-	11.1	3.7
Nursery School	22.2	22.2	22.2
Day Care Centre	27.8	11.1	22.2
After-School Program	5.9	-	3.7

Notes: [1] Includes workplace day care

[2] Includes respondents who are looking for employment.

Data is missing for six families.

Table 21

Preferred Main Type of Child Care Arrangement for School-Aged Children, by Respondent's Current Work Status and Urban-Rural Residence

Preferred Main Type of Child Care	Urban	Rural	Combined
		Percent	
Employed Full-Time			
Parent(s)	10.3	20.8	14.3
Relative	12.8	8.3	11.1
In Home Non-Relative	7.7	12.5	9.5
Other Home Non-Relative	2.6	–	1.6
Day Care Centre[1]	28.2	33.3	30.2
After-School Program	20.5	8.3	15.9
Sibling or Alone	2.6	4.2	3.2
Occasional Care	15.4	8.3	12.7
Other	–	4.2	1.6
Employed Part-Time			
Parent(s)	20.0	80.0	44.0
Relative	–		
In Home Non-Relative	20.0	–	12.0
Other Home Non-Relative	6.7	–	4.0
After-School Program	26.7	–	16.0
Sibling or Alone	–	20.0	8.0
Occasional Care	20.0	–	12.0
Other	6.7	–	4.0
Home-Maker; Not Working[2]			
Parent(s)	58.3	80.0	68.2
Relative	8.3	10.0	9.1
In Home Non-Relative	16.7	–	9.1
Other Home Non-Relative	–		
After-School Program	16.7	–	9.1
Sibling or Alone	–	10.0	4.5

Notes: 1 Includes workplace day care

2 Includes respondents who are looking for employment.

Data is missing for six families.

7.4.2 In-Home Care by a Non-Relative

A preference for in-home care by a non-relative (a friend, paid sitter, or "nanny") was most noticeable among families with a target child younger than two years. In general, in-home care by a non-relative was preferred to care provided by a non-relative outside the home.

7.4.3 Care by a Relative

As mentioned in Chapter 5, many parents see relatives as important back-up, weekend, or part-time caregivers. As such, they often did not appear as the dominant, preferred child care option. An exception was for rural families in which mothers of infants were employed full-time.

7.4.4 Care by Parent(s)

Care by parent(s) was recorded as the preferred option when mothers preferred to be home, when shared work and child care arrangements were strongly desired, and/or when mothers stated that they most preferred that their spouse provide care when they are unavailable. Care by either parent was most strongly preferred by rural respondents. Readers probably should bear in mind that a significant proportion of rural mothers preferred to be homemakers or work at home, and that spouses were more likely to be available for child care, especially when rural mothers worked evenings or on an on-call basis.

7.4.5 Other Supplementary Care Resources

A further point that should be made is that many families who had a stated preference for care being provided by a parent commented on the desire/need for parents to have available to them some community or personal resources to help with child care on an occasional basis, or to provide children with enrichment experiences and/or opportunities for interacting with peers (e.g., nursery schools). Typical comments were as follows:

> I wish there was some kind of help for mothers who want to stay home and be mothers - particularly, free recreation programs for preschoolers and summer activities for school-aged children.
>
> I'd really like a small, family day care to put my child in once a week for her sake and to give me a break.

A number of farm families also commented on the need for organized recreational programs for children - especially during the summer - with transportation services included.

7.5 The Match Between Preferred and Current Child Care Arrangements

Table 22 presents the percentage of families currently using their most preferred type of child care as the current main method of care for an infant or preschooler, and after-school for a school-aged child. These results need to be interpreted with some caution. In particular, individual percentages are often based on small numbers of families. The table includes in it care provided for 30 or more hours per week, as well as care used for a small number of hours by full-time homemakers. Tables based only on families with mothers working full-time would probably yield different results. In addition, any sampling biases that may be present need to be considered. Nonetheless, the results do lead to some general conclusions.

Table 22

Comparison of Main Type of Care Being Used and Preferred Child Care Arrangements, by Age Group of Target Child

	Percentage of Families Using their Preferred Care Arrangement as Main Type of Care		
Preferred Type of Care	Infants	Preschoolers	School-Aged[1]
Parent(s)	38.9	31.3	44.8
Relative	42.9	57.1	88.9
In Home Non-Relative[2]	42.9	44.4	7.7
Other Home Non-Relative	33.3	40.0	0.0
Day Care Centre/Workplace Day Care	38.5	51.6[3]	0.0
Nursery School	0.0	60.0	
After-School Program	0.0	0.0	31.6
Sibling or Alone	0.0	0.0	0.0
Occasional Care Only	100.0	100.0	100.0

40 missing cases

Notes:

[1] Main type of care other than school.

[2] "In home Non-Relative" includes nanny.

[3] As for other percentages in this table, the percentage of families utilizing particular types of care may reflect sampling biases and should be replicated on a larger scale.

1. It seems, for the most part, that less than half of parents are using their most preferred arrangement, whatever that preference may be. There are some exceptions, especially families where a parent is home and using supplemental care on an occasional basis.

2. Centre care (including workplace day care) was being used by fewer than 40% of the families with infants who preferred centre care, and by slightly more than half of those families with a preschool child who preferred centre care. After-school programs were being used by less than one-third of families who would have preferred that type of care.

Data presented in Chapter 6 which explained why parents either did not consider or did not use alternatives to their current arrangements (affordability; availability; convenience; and difficulty in finding high-quality caregivers/programs that were affordable, available and convenient), and data presented earlier in this chapter on the reasons parents were not utilizing the employment/homemaker pattern they considered most beneficial for meeting their own and their family's needs explain why families preferred child care methods are, in so many cases, not being used. Throughout the interviews, many parents repeatedly expressed their desire for additional services, and other means of increasing the quantity and quality of child care options available to them. Parents' opinions on these matters and others are discussed in Chapter 8.

CHAPTER 8.0 PARENTS' OPINIONS AND CONCERNS ABOUT CHILD CARE

In keeping with the final objective of this study, we utilized a number of questions designed to explore parents' opinions about what services, practices, policies, and forms of assistance would best help them provide the kind and quality of child care they would most prefer. These questions covered a range of issues, focusing primarily on what steps parents felt the federal and provincial governments should take to help Canadian families utilize high-quality, affordable care that is consistent with their needs and preferences.

8.1 Strength of Support for Various Government Actions

Parents were given a list of nine specific actions that could be taken "to help communities provide more and better child care." Parents were asked, first, which of these things the government should spend money on, and, second, which three actions they felt were most important. The results are presented in Table 23.

Table 23 reveals that the parents in this sample felt that much should be done. There was widespread support for virtually every option given. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that discrepancies between urban and rural respondents were not large. The two most popular responses, which were also ranked most often as being of highest importance, were not direct service options. They were: 1) funding community-based information and referral services, and 2) having a monitoring system to check on caregivers.

Table 23

Parents' Opinions: Strength of Support for Various Government Actions

Alternative	Percent Who Feel Such Action Should Be Taken: Total Sample*	Urban	Rural	Percent of Total Sample Who Ranked Action Among Top 3 Steps to Be Taken
Fund community-based information and referral services	80.4	85.9	73.9	44.0
Establish additional day care centres	59.8	65.6	53.2	30.4
Establish more approved, supervised child home care services	66.4	67.7	65.0	24.7
Fund summer programs	69.6	71.9	68.1	24.4
Fund before- and after-school programs	69.0	78.1	57.7	30.4
Have a monitoring system to check on caregivers	79.5	83.9	75.7	33.9
Offer more training programs for caregivers	71.7	72.8	71.3	28.6
Establish more centres for infants and toddlers	66.4	73.4	58.2	30.4
Provide tax incentives to encourage employers to provide child care facilities or services	75.3	82.3	67.4	30.1
Other	11.6	13.0	9.7	8.6

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* All 336 respondents.

Community-based information and referral services seem to be appropriate for urban and rural areas, and are seen as providing both information and support to enable parents to choose the type of caregiver or program they most prefer. They can be used by homemakers as well as by full- and part-time working parents, as an aid to seeking both long-term and short-term care arrangements, and as a vehicle for promoting high-quality care through public education and through other functions such as recruiting, screening, and providing resources to caregivers.

The monitoring system parents desire seems to result directly from their concerns about the quality of care provided by unlicensed, unsupervised caregivers. While the interviews unearthed only one true horror story of abuse and neglect of an infant, many parents had heard stories from friends or had directly experienced child care that was inferior, unstimulating or unreliable. In addition to a monitoring system, more than 70% of parents agreed that more training programs should be made available to caregivers, and almost two-thirds felt that more effort should be made to establish approved, supervised child home care services.

In addition to these steps, there was widespread support for the establishment of a range of formal services - centres for infants and toddlers, day care centres, and before- and after-school programs. Although parents were often most supportive of the particular type of care most needed by them at the present time, 89% felt that more centres/formal programs should be established, and 67% ranked expanding formal services of one or more types as highest in importance.

Finally, Table 23 indicates that most parents are supportive of government efforts to encourage employers to provide child care facilities and/or services.

Other suggestions/concerns voiced spontaneously were:

- the fact that day care teachers' salaries are too low to attract and maintain high-quality, talented staff;
- the need for a stable funding base for non-profit centres and programs to enable them to survive fluctuations in enrollments;
- the need for additional programs for special-needs children; and
- the need for transportation to summer recreational programs, especially in rural areas.

8.2 Views on Employers' Support of Child Care

As mentioned previously, parents were widely supportive of government efforts to encourage employers to provide child care facilities or services. At the time of the interview, less than 15% of employed mothers had workplace day care available on site. (We believe this percentage is significantly higher than would be found in a representative random sample.) Almost 30% of students in this sample reported that child care was available to them at their educational institutions. On the other hand, our own experiences on university campuses testify to strong unmet needs for child care for students and their families.

Mothers and single-parent fathers who worked full- or part-time had indicated that 65.4% felt their employers were supportive or very supportive of them in their role as parent, 24.1% felt their employer/work situation partially supported them as parents, and 10.5% described their employer/work situation as not very supportive or definitely not supportive of their role as parents. When asked what changes, if any, they thought were reasonable ones that employers could make to support and assist parents,

- 15 parents spontaneously mentioned establishment of workplace day care,
- 6 suggested job-sharing mechanisms,
- 18 suggested flexible time scheduling, and
- 21 commented on the need for flexible leave arrangements.

Another suggestion was that employers simply be more understanding. When asked directly, 72.6% of the total sample felt that some provisions for paid parental leave should be required of all employers. Those who were opposed to the idea generally felt either that parental leave was not an employer's responsibility, or that such a policy was not feasible and/or too costly, especially for small businesses.

8.3 Parents' Views on Costs and Financial Arrangements

8.3.1 Who Should Pay for Child Care?

Parents were asked a number of questions about their views of how costs for child care arrangements should be handled. In response to the direct question, "Who should pay for child care?":

- 7.7% agreed that parents should pay all costs of the child care they use;
- 81.0% felt parents should pay for child care on a sliding scale adjusted according to their ability to pay;
- 9.8% stated that child care should be free to all those who might need it, regardless of their income; and
- 1.5% did not express an opinion.

8.3.2 Government Assistance With Child Care Costs

When asked how the government might assist parents with child care costs, parents were more equally divided between two views.

- 8.9% would prefer direct cash payments to working parents for child care costs;
- 42.0% would prefer direct cash payments to the person or agency providing child care;
- 46.1% agreed that a child care tax deduction or child care tax credit would be best; and
- 3.0% did not agree with any of the above.

8.3.3 Use of the Child Care Tax Deduction

One of the questions we asked parents was whether they claimed the child care expense deduction on their income tax. Among those who had paid $20 or more for child care in the week preceding the interview, 60.7% said they had claimed it last year; 39.3% had not. Parents' reasons for not claiming the child care expense deduction, in their own words, were:

- No receipts (39.1%),
- No or little money paid out (18.2%),
- Too complicated (9.1%),
- Income too high (6.1%),
- Income too low (6.1%),
- Other (e.g., child was not in care last year) (21.4%).

We also asked parents who were claiming the child care expense deduction if they were satisfied with it. Forty-seven parents said, "Yes," 45 said, "No." Those who were dissatisfied gave as their reasons:

- that the maximum amount that can be claimed is too low (66.7%),
- that it should be available to all families using child care (15.6%),
- that receipts should not be required (15.6%).

Eight parents spontaneously commented that there should not be a maximum amount specified, and that all child care expenses required to enable parents to work should be allowable. An especially sore point among farm families seems to be how the child care expense deduction applies to them. Several farm wives commented that they felt discriminated against, specifically when applying for a subsidy, since interest on farm debts did not appear to be considered in needs or means tests applied by some provincial governments.

8.4 Steps That Might Be Taken to Raise the Quality of Child Care

The quality of child care arrangements was the number one concern within this sample, although concerns about availability and costs were also pervasive. As indicated in Chapter 6, quality factors were critical to parents' decisions about which type of child care, and, more specifically, which particular caregiver or program they would utilize. Quality care is a concern to parents who use care on an occasional basis, as well as to parents who regularly attend an educational institution or work outside their homes.

When asked, "Who in your opinion should be primarily responsible for seeing that children are provided with good quality care when their parents are working or at school?" the largest percentage of respondents (42.3%) said that parents were primarily responsible, and many felt that parents always should be primarily responsible for this. Almost as many respondents, however, indicated that the responsibility for ensuring that children are provided with good quality care is a responsibility that is shared by parents, providers, and the government.

8.4.1 Care Provided by Individual Caregivers

Among the government actions parents had ranked and rated were three that might be viewed as steps to improve the quality of home day care arrangements:

- Establish more approved, supervised child care home services.
- Have a monitoring system to check on caregivers.
- Offer more training programs for caregivers.

Each of these actions was strongly supported.

In view of the Task Force's mandate, we also asked parents about whether or not they felt standards or requirements should be set for individual caregivers who might provide care in the parents' home or in the caregiver's home. The question was worded as follows:

> "Do you think there should be personal qualifications set for non-related people who care for children in the children's own home? In other words, should sitters be required to pass health exams, education requirements, or meet some other kind of standard if they provide care in your home?.... What about when care is provided on a regular basis in a sitter's home and the sitter is paid for child care?"

In all, 79.2% of parents thought that some standard should be set in the case of purchased care provided in the child's home, and 82.4% agreed that some minimum requirement should apply for paid care in the sitter's home. More specific results are depicted below:

	Percent in Agreement	
	Care in Child's Home	Care in Caregiver's Home
Provider should be required to pass a health exam	49.7	58.6
Some education or training requirement	51.5	60.7
Other requirement	26.2	28.6
Some standard should be set	79.2	82.4

Parents who suggested an "other" requirement frequently suggested characteristics that cannot be regulated, such as "being a warm, caring person who really enjoys children." The one "other" suggestion that can be given serious consideration is mandatory first aid training, mentioned by 12% of parents.

The fact that such a large majority of parents agreed that some standard should be required of individual caregivers is an extremely important one, given the fact that licensed/registered/supervised family home day care is still a very new program in Canada, and has not quite begun in a number of provinces. No province has ever set regulatory standards for care provided in the child's own home, despite the fact that care in the child's home is an attractive, convenient, and widely-used type of care, especially for infants. In this sample, more than 20% of parents used care by a non-relative in their own homes on a regular basis for infants and for preschool children, as did almost 10% of parents with school-aged children.

It is also interesting to note that, when asked about the specific evaluative criteria parents would use when selecting an individual caregiver, a requirement that the caregiver be licensed or registered with the province or a local day care agency was rated by parents as, "Not too important, but does matter."

In reconciling what appears to be contradictory findings, we simply note that parents may not appreciate that licensing, registration, or affiliation with an agency is often the regulatory mechanism that is required to ensure that minimum standards are met. At this point, parents seem to be simply reflecting the concern they feel about the lack of any means (other than parental discretion and parental monitoring) to ensure that individual caregivers who are strangers to them initially will provide the quality of care they and their children need.

8.4.2 Centre Care

While parents were not asked a parallel question regarding minimum standards for centre care, we did ask parents about their views of private enterprise, for-profit day care centres, since this has been a controversial issue, with some day care advocates arguing that commercial centres are less likely to maintain high-quality care. We found that parents did not have a strong opinion on this issue: 26.8% of parents thought private centres should not be allowed, 28.9% thought they should be encouraged somewhat or encouraged generally, and the remainder were neutral, although leaning towards discouraging private centres to some extent. Interestingly, the strongest opponents of commercial centre care seemed to be located in those provinces with provincial legislation that opposes commercial centres.

The issue for this sample clearly was not sponsorship, but observed quality. At least ten mothers spontaneously commented that there should be monitoring of care in centres and that some centres they had seen were of very poor quality. Reference has already been made to the fact that, while parents see centre care as an expensive service, a number of parents noted the low salaries paid to centre personnel and the subsequent effects on turnover, morale, and the quality of staff. While only one centre user in this study said that she would prefer to change her arrangement, at least 12 referred to particular improvements they would like to see in the centre's physical plant, equipment, outdoor play space, and so on. Ironically, many of these comments came from the same province, which has strongly encouraged private centre operators.

8.5 Parents' Opinions and Concerns: An Overview

In summary, parents in this sample vigorously support a range of government actions designed to increase the availability and quality of both home day care services and formal child care programs for infants, preschoolers and school-aged children, as well as the establishment of information and referral centres that would serve a number of functions for all parents in the community.

Parents were also in favour of government actions that would help encourage employers to take a more active role in providing employees with child care services, as well as ensuring private sector support of parents through parental leave policies and flexible job sharing and time scheduling.

Parents in this sample, in general, felt that parents should pay for child care on a sliding scale adjusted to ability to pay, but that additional government assistance with child care expenditures should be made in the form of either direct cash payments to caregivers or programs, or a more flexible and generous child care expense tax deduction.

In addition to providing more centres to serve the needs of families with infants, preschoolers, and school-aged children, respondents in this sample endorsed a number of actions that would raise the quality of caregiving provided by non-relatives both in the child's own home and in the caregiver's home. Parents firmly endorsed the idea of minimum standards or requirements for paid caregivers, and also supported the establishment of more approved, supervised family day care homes; more training programs for caregivers; and monitoring of both individual caregivers and centre programs. Parents who did not use child care on a regular basis agreed, for the most part, with child-care consumers about the need for additional high-quality programs. Many of them, especially in rural areas, also have unmet needs for community-based, free or low-cost recreation programs, especially in the summertime, as well as some unique seasonal needs for in-home care. Other full-time homemakers would benefit from occasional use of a drop-in parent-child centre and the availability of child care information and support services that would offer further encouragement to them as parents in providing quality care to their own (and sometimes other) children.

CHAPTER 9.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Both Canada and the U.S. have been described as being at a critical "crossroads" point in terms of facing major decisions about their commitments to supporting child care services and family resource programs in a time of severe economic restraint. As Millar (1982, p. 477) has noted,

> To say that there are a host of issues that need to be addressed in setting out a strategy for day care is an understatement. At the same time, the fundamental issues are not overwhelming in number. They begin with what types of care, for what children and for what purposes? From there a vision of the components (types and programs) of the system and how they fit together is constructed. Then there is the question of how quality in all settings is to be promoted and whether different approaches or a combination of approaches is required. The final step would be setting out ways the supply is to be created and how the various options for providing access can be organized.

As Millar has also noted, in addition to the cost implications involved, social planning in this area is further complicated by the fact that such policies relate very directly to differing points of view and value orientations about the respective roles and responsibilities of government and parents in relation to child care. The appointment of the Task Force on Child Care and its mandate, and the announced intention of creating a Parliamentary Task Force on Child Care along with federal-provincial consultations about this issue, attest to the seriousness of the debate over future child care policies.

Because of the complexities involved, it is essential that government planners and policy makers have access to the most accurate, relevant information available as a basis for decision-making. In order to serve that need, an intensive large-scale research study would be required, using a statistically representative national sample, and including in it a separate panel from each province. Such a study has been proposed and is awaiting funding approval.

The present study was undertaken as a means of providing the Task Force on Child Care with information about the scope of Canadians' needs for child care, their current use patterns, and parents' preferences, concerns and opinions about child care and possible government actions. Intensive interviews were conducted with 336 parents of infants, preschoolers, and school-aged children in urban and rural areas in 14 sites located geographically from Vancouver to Halifax. By its nature, the present study cannot be used as a substitute for the larger national study that has been proposed. It can be used as a significant, in-depth exploration of the major child care issues and concerns that Canadian families are faced with and that policy makers must understand.

9.1 The Nature of Child Care Needs

Traditional economic and social service definitions of need focus on a limited range of purposes to be served by child care in a limited proportion of families. An alternative view of non-parental child care is that it is a common type of family support used to some degree by most families for a variety of purposes. The families who participated in this study utilized child care for many reasons. They include:

- care for children when parents are working or looking for work;
- care while parents attend an educational institution or training program;
- care for children and support to families with special needs;
- child care as a means of providing children with opportunities designed to stimulate their development, promote personal competence, and enable the development of social skills with peers and other adults;
- care required as a supportive resource to families at specific times of peak need, or when the usual child care arrangements are not available; and
- care used for the purpose of enabling parents to participate in volunteer or community activities, to attend to personal and family tasks, and/or as a means of allowing them time to socialize with other adults.

In this particular sample (which had a high rate of maternal participation in the labour force) full-time non-maternal care was required for:

- 41.2% of families with a child under 2 years of age,
- 50.9% of families with a preschool child 2-5 years old, and
- 57.3% of families with a child 6-12 years old.

Regular part-time care was required for:

- 30.4% of families with a child under 2,
- 22.6% of families with preschooler, and
- 22.7% of families with a school-aged child.

Regular evening and/or weekend care was required every week by 25% of families for work-related reasons, and by more than half of all mothers to enable participation in community activities or to attend to personal and family matters.

Other needs for care that were examined included the need for back-up arrangements on professional development days, when children are ill, and on occasions when regular care arrangements fall through. Unreliable care arrangements were shown to directly affect absenteeism from work or classes in 30 families (almost 10% of the sample group). Needs for care during the summer months were also examined. Twenty-eight percent of those families who regularly used some form of child care during the school year made special arrangements for the summer months. Other parents' work/study schedules shifted to enable them to be home with their children; hence the summer months are a time of marked changes in the amount and kinds of child care many families need or desire. A particularly strong, unmet need was identified for free or low-cost summer recreation programs for preschool and school-aged children (with transportation made available), especially in rural areas. Other rural families have seasonal needs for in-home caregivers for young children. These needs were met by other family members when available; other rural families had difficulty finding appropriate care for their children at such times.

9.2 Child Care Use Patterns

Some form of non-maternal child care was used in the week preceding the study by almost all families. Regular non-parental care (other than school) was used by:

- 64% of families with an infant,
- 86% of families with a preschooler, and
- 45% of families with a school-aged child.

Regular arrangements were used not only by families with working mothers, but by families in which the mother (or father) was neither employed nor attending an educational institution or training program. Combinations of two or more non-parental care arrangements were common. Combinations were used for a variety of reasons: to cover work hours, to supplement when a spouse or relative is not available, as the best way to meet the child's needs, for economic reasons, and as a supplement to part-day kindergarten or nursery programs.

It was found that 6.5% of target infants and 13% of preschool children in this particular sample spent 21-30 hours in regular, non-parental care arrangements in the week preceding the interview; and that almost one-quarter of each group spent more than 30 hours in regular non-parental care arrangements.

When the main type of care utilized for each child was considered, we found the following patterns:

For infants and preschoolers,

- The father was identified as the main caregiver for children under 6 in 15% of the cases in which mothers worked full-time and 23% of cases in which mothers worked part-time. In most of these circumstances fathers' and mothers' work/study hours did not coincide, either because one or both parents worked shifts, or because the mother worked or attended school in the evening. In other cases, the father was a farmer and could provide care at least part of the time.

- Relatives were regular main caregivers less frequently than anticipated (for 14.6% of infants, and only 9.2% of preschoolers). Relatives were most likely to be main caregivers when the mother was a full-time homemaker (therefore for fewer hours per week than other main caregivers). Relatives, when available, seem more likely to play an important back-up function for parents when the need arises.

- Group Care was the most common main type of care used for preschoolers in this sample.

  - 23.6% of preschoolers who had some regular non-maternal care attended a day care centre, while

  - 49.9% of children aged 2-5 attended either a nursery school or kindergarten.

  Centres were used most often by families in which the mother was working or attending school on a full-time basis.

- Care by a non-relative (a neighbour, friend, or paid sitter) was used as the regular main method of care by 20.2% of families with an infant as the target child, and by 17.9% of families with a preschooler.

  Care by a non-relative in the child's home was used twice as often as care in the sitter's home for infants, but was fairly evenly split among preschoolers.

Among school-aged children,

- Fathers were likely to be the main non-maternal caregiver when mothers were not available, especially when mothers are homemakers or work part-time.

- Before- and after-school programs were used by almost one-fourth of families with full-time working mothers, a proportion that we believe is considerably higher than would be found using a random national sample.

- Latch-key arrangements were reportedly used by only one family as the main method of non-maternal, non-school care. However, 16 school- aged children were cared for primarily by an older sibling, and 31 families indicated that their child spent some time alone or in a sibling's care during the week before the interview.

9.3 Costs of Child Care Arrangements

Costs vary according to many factors - the type of care utilized, the number of hours of care, the number and ages of children requiring care, etc. When asked to estimate total child care costs for all children in the week preceding the interview, 56.3% of families reported no costs, 16.7% spent $1-25, 10.7% spent between $26 and $49, another 6.8% spent between $50 and $74, 9.6% reported spending more than $75, and 6% spent $100 or more.

An analysis of out-of-pocket expenditures for day care centres supported the suspicion that families who use centre care are likely to be either subsidized or upper-middle class in most provinces. Costs for a number of types of care were quite varied: care by a non-relative in the child's home was the most variable.

9.4 Factors Influencing Child Care Use Patterns

9.4.1 The Ecology of Child Care

As indicated in Chapters 6 and 7, many interacting factors exert an influence on a family's ultimate choice/use of a particular child care arrangement or combination of arrangements at a particular time.

Factors that influence and define the specific needs families have must be juxtaposed against parents' perceptions of the availability, affordability, convenience and quality of various child care alternatives, and parents' own values and attitudes related to child-rearing. This complex interplay among child, family, employment, and community variables (including federal and provincial policies that ultimately affect the availability, affordability and quality of alternative care arrangements) is referred to as the ecology of child care. Viewed from this perspective, the child care use patterns that we observe at any time reflect the particular solutions parents in specific communities have found best meet their current needs and fit their circumstances and values.

9.4.2 Parents' Evaluative Criteria

Not surprisingly, when asked, parents indicated that many aspects of child care settings are important to them when they consider the various alternatives. Caregiver/program reliability is viewed as essential. Other considerations that were rated by parents as very important to them included:

- the extent to which children would be given individual attention in a way that is consistent with parents' values and expectations;
- features of the physical environment (good outdoor play space, hot, well-prepared nutritious meals/snacks);
- factors that relate to parents' needs, time, and convenience (flexibility to accommodate changes in schedules, a convenient location, and, to a lesser extent, care for a child with a minor illness); and
- the extent to which the caregiver/setting would encourage children's creativity and curiosity through developmentally appropriate activities and experiences.

When selecting a centre or after-school program, parents felt that it would be important to choose a licensed centre/program that would offer them the opportunity to be involved in decisions that would affect the quality of care offered to their children. When asked about care by a neighbour or sitter, parents said it was important that they know this person for a while before contracting her services. Parents rated obtaining receipts for child care and use of a licensed/ registered caregiver as less important to them than other considerations.

9.4.3 Parents' Reasons for Using Specific Child Care Arrangements

Parents' reasons for using or not using specific child care arrangements were consistent with findings from other research studies. In general, parents used the type of care that they felt best met their own and their children's needs, within the specific constraints imposed on them by work/study schedules, financial resources, personal flexibility (e.g., time constraints, access to transportation), and the availability of various alternatives (spouse, relatives, neighbours, sitters, and centres/programs appropriate to their child's age).

9.4.4 Care by the Father

Care by the father was used as the main type of non-maternal care most often when mothers were employed or attending school part-time or in the evenings, and when mothers were full-time homemakers. Care by fathers when mothers work full-time is a viable option only when parental work schedules can accommodate such an arrangement, which occurs when parents work alternative shifts or when the father is a farmer and is willing and able to manage child care along with farm work, especially during the less demanding farm seasons. Care by the father on a full-time basis was more common for infants, and was viewed as the most appropriate choice by those parents who strongly believed that parents should be wholly responsible for child care and/or those who could not afford to pay for care.

9.4.5 Care by Relatives

Care by relatives was used most often on a part-time basis or as a back-up arrangement. Most families who did not consider or did not use care by a relative said no relative was available for this purpose. About eight families preferred not to impose on relatives. In addition, once a child reached the age of three or four, most parents preferred an arrangement that would allow their child to have opportunities to play with other children.

9.4.6 Care by a Sitter in the Child's Home

While many parents, especially those with two or more young children, might prefer this option to others, the majority of parents did not consider/use it because they could not find a reliable caregiver who met their standards and/ or because it was too expensive for them. Others preferred group care to care by a non-relative in the child's home as a means of providing more stimulating care in a setting that offered their child opportunities to play with others.

9.4.7 Care by an Unlicensed Sitter in the Sitter's Home

Those parents who did not consider care by an unlicensed sitter gave several reasons - some viewed it as less convenient than other methods; others expressed concern about the quality and/or cost of sitter care, and others specifically wanted a centre arrangement. Those parents who had considered sitter care but did not utilize it most often based their decision on concerns about quality or cost, or on the fact that they could not find a sitter who both met their standards and was available at the times that were needed. The other main reason for their choice was a desire for child-peer interactions.

9.4.8 Group Care

Care in a day care centre was used by slightly less than one-fourth of the families with preschool children in this sample, most often on a full-time basis. Enrollment in a nursery school or part-day kindergarten program was popular, but was most often used by families in which mothers worked on a part-time basis or were homemakers. Families who did not consider centre care most often said it was because their child was too young. Others cited cost, convenience, the desire for a home arrangement, concerns about quality, and lack of availability, in that order. Families with a child under 2 who had considered centre care but did not use it most often said it was because their child was too young (an answer which partly reflects an opinion about the appropriateness of group care for infants and toddlers, and partly reflects the lack of available centre spaces for this age group). Other reasons given by parents with children under two years of age for not using centre care were: lack of available centres/spaces, concerns about quality, and cost. More than half of the parents of preschool children who considered centre care decided against this alternative because of the cost. The second and third most common reasons cited were convenience and concerns about quality.

Before- and after-school programs were utilized by approximately 15% of the families in this sample with school-aged children, usually by families with a full-time working mother. Since the number of communities with such programs is still limited, lack of availability was the major factor explaining parents' failure to consider this alternative. Other parents either found that after-school programs were not geared to children older than eight or nine years of age, or simply preferred a home arrangement. Some parents with children ten years or older thought that their child was old enough to be looked after by a sibling or manage on his/her own for an hour or two after school.

In summary, parents' reasons for considering and then using particular types of arrangements depended on fit with parental and child needs, availability, affordability, convenience, and perceived quality. The relative weight given to each of these factors depended on the child's age, the nature of parents' working hours, parents' attitudes and values, family resources, and the quality and availability of alternatives in the communities we studied. As a footnote we mention that most of the families that were interviewed were not familiar with and had little access to licensed/sponsored family home day care arrangements.

9.5 Parents' Preferences

9.5.1 Preferences Among Employment Options

Data presented in Chapter 7 revealed that no one family employment/homemaker pattern was clearly preferred by a majority of families for any age group of the target children. Parents seem to have more diversified employment preferences than is usually anticipated. Interestingly, the pattern of both parents working full-time in two-parent families was preferred most often by families in this sample with preschool-aged children. The pattern of father working full-time and mother working part-time was particularly attractive to families with a school-aged child and was preferred by the largest minority (31% of two-parent families, and 34.6% of single-parent families).

Parents who would have preferred to work part- rather than full-time, or be homemakers rather than work outside the home most often said that they could not afford to lose the income they gained from employment. Others indicated that their employer would not permit a preferred part-time work schedule, or that they had concerns about career progress and/or loss of seniority. Other parents who would have preferred to work at home recognized that their current jobs could not be done at home or that they lacked job skills for at-home work. Another sub-group (18 mothers) who would have preferred to work outside their homes or increase their hours from a part-time to a full-time basis could not do so because they reportedly could not find/afford good child care.

9.5.2 Preferences Among Child Care Arrangements

Chapter 7 also presents data about parents' child care preferences. Naturally, preferences varied according to the age of the child. There were also significant differences in parents' preferred options according to mothers' current employment/homemaker status and urban-rural location.

9.5.3 Centre Care

There was considerable preference for "formal" child services (day care centres, nursery schools and before- and after-school programs), especially among urban families and families in which mothers worked full-time. Within this sample, centre care (including workplace day care) was preferred by 41.5% of mothers of infants who worked full-time, and by 22.6% of mothers of infants who worked part-time. These percentages were actually higher than those derived from families with a preschool target child (some of whom preferred part-day nursery school or kindergarten programs in combination with a sitter, relative or spouse). Among families with a preschooler, 32.1% of full-time working mothers preferred centre care, as did 33.3% of those who were employed part-time. After-school programs were preferred by 16% of families with mothers who were employed full-time or part-time. The latter figure might have been higher if more communities offered such programs.

9.5.4 Care by a Non-Relative

Care by a non-relative in the child's home was generally preferred more often than care in the sitter's home. In-home care by a sitter was preferred by 17% of mothers who had infants and who work full-time, and by 23% of such of mothers who work part-time. The corresponding figures for families with preschoolers were 15% and 8% for full-time and part-time employed mothers, respectively. In all probability, the number and ages of other children in the family is an important factor in parents' preferences for an in-home arrangement and should be studied in more depth.

9.5.5 Care by Relatives

Given the fact that most families in this sample did not have access to a relative who could provide care on a regular full- or part-time basis, few families expressed a strong preference for care by a relative as their main type of care. Relatives were most often mentioned as preferred caregivers for infants, especially among rural families.

9.5.6 Exclusive Parental Care

The majority of families in which mothers were homemakers at the time of the study preferred that they and their spouses retain primary care responsibilities. Parental care was also often preferred by families in which mothers worked part-time, especially in rural areas.

Taken as a whole, parents' comments about employment and child care preferences indicate that many families are not currently utilizing the employment/homemaker pattern and/or the child care option that they feel is best suited to their own and their family's needs. Some mothers who would prefer to work part-time, work at home, or be homemakers cannot do so for economic or other reasons already mentioned. Similar reasons apply when parents prefer, but are not able to share child care between themselves as the main method of caregiving, along with additional support provided by relatives, friends, drop-in centres and community-based recreation and preschool programs on a supplementary basis. Centre care (including workplace day care) was being used by less than 40% of families with infants who preferred centre care, and by slightly more than half of those families with a preschool child who preferred centre care. After-school programs were being used by less than a third of families who would have preferred that option. Parents' reasons for not using or not considering particular arrangements have been discussed. The major factors that appear to limit parents' use of preferred, non-parental child care options are the availability, quality and cost of those alternatives.

9.6 Parents' Opinions and Concerns About Child Care

Parents in this sample vigorously endorsed a range of government actions that would increase the availability and quality of both home day care services and formal child care programs for infants, preschoolers and school-aged children. They also strongly endorsed the establishment of multi-purpose information and referral centres that could serve a number of functions for all parents in the community.

Most parents were also in favour of government action that would encourage employers to take a more active role in providing employees with workplace day care, and in changes in employers' policies regarding parental leave, job sharing, and time scheduling.

In addition to providing more neighbourhood-based centres, parents supported a number of steps that might be taken to improve the quality of care provided by non-related caregivers, both in the child's own home and in the caregiver's home. Among them were minimum standards or requirements for paid caregivers; the establishment of more approved, supervised family day care homes; more training programs for caregivers; and the monitoring of both individual caregivers and centre programs. Parents who do not use child-care on a regular basis agreed, for the most part, with child-care consumers about the need for additional affordable, high-quality care.

The families in our sample do not see themselves as favouring abdication by parents of their responsibilities for providing optimum care for their children. Most are making every effort to do what they feel is best for themselves and for their families. Their personal comments and involvement during the interviews underscored how important they feel it is that they be able to choose among desirable options that will meet their needs (including the option for a parent to remain home with children in an economically and socially supportive context). Their endorsement of a range of government initiatives is seen by them as fostering a partnership among parents, care providers, employers, and government that would best meet that end and ultimately serve all Canadian families.

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